Cannock & Rugeley
CHRONICLE
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Millions paid out for negligence claims in just one year

NHS TRUST £12m BLUNDERS BILL

Report by Alex Ross

THE NHS Trust which runs Cannock Chase Hospital tops the table in the Black Country for payouts and associated costs due to medical blunders in just one year.

A total of £11.9m – of which £7.8m were compensation payments – was paid out on behalf of The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust for clinical negligence claims in 2016/17.

The trust which is mainly associated with New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton, has seen its bill rise significantly from £3m in 2015/16.

The remainder of the money paid out on behalf of the trust for negligence claims went to defence and claimant costs.

Some of the payouts go back to cases many years ago.

Elsewhere in the Black Country, money paid out by NHS Resolution, which replaced the NHS Litigation Authority this year, fluctuated from last year.

Partnership

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, which runs Russells Hall Hospital, had a total bill of £9.6m paid over 2016/17, up from £5.6m the year before.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, however, saw its bill drop from £14.4m in 2015/16 to £8.7m in 2016/17.

The trust runs City Hospital in Birmingham and Sandwell General Hospital.

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, which runs Walsall Manor, had a bill paid of £6.7m in 2016/17, down from £15.3m the year before.

At Dudley & Walsall Mental Health Partnership Trust, just £20,740 was paid out in negligence claims in 2016/17, down from £109,193.

And at the Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, £84,122 was paid out, down from £116,384.

The figures have been analysed by the Lib Dems. Rob Quarmby, a party campaigner from Wolverhampton, said: "The costs of clinical negligence claims are spiralling at a time of immense financial pressures on our National Health Service, taking scarce resources away from frontline services and patients."

READY, TEDDY, GO – AND HERE'S OUR TOP CAT

Chilling – Teddy just loves to lie in the dovecote

WELL here he is – by popular request – our Animal Crackers winner Teddy.

Over the weeks of our competition for the best pet photograph we had more than 500 entries and in the reader vote Teddy came out well on top.

Here he is in a dovecote and his owner Vicky Sterrett said this is just one of the places he likes to squeeze into. Vicky, from Bloxwich, said Teddy found her four years ago, arriving on her doorstep as a stray.

She found that he wasn't microchipped and was about four years old. Vicky fell in love instantly and decided to keep him.

Cheeky

He has a cheeky personality and is a very busy boy spending most of his time in the garden, in the greenhouse and of course the dovecote. This was specially made by a carpenter at a local day care centre for adults with learning disabilities.

It was originally put there for the birds and squirrels but not long after having it Teddy started using it as his hiding place.

In the late summer of 2015 he arrived home dragging his right back leg. After an emergency dash to the vets Vicky was told that he had been hit by a car and had a dislocated right hip which required surgery to repair the damage.

After excellent service from the vet and several weeks of TLC Teddy was back on his feet and was awarded Pet of the Month at the vets with his picture adorning the surgery wall.

"We have always thought he was a superstar and winning this competition has proved that other people think so as well," said Vicky.

"After speaking to Teddy we have decided to donate the £100 prize money to Walsall & Wolverhampton Cats Protection for all the amazing work they do," Vicky added.

ENVIRONMENT

200 fridges are illegally dumped

NEARLY 200 fridges have been illegally dumped in South Staffordshire since April.

South Staffordshire Council has revealed it has prosecuted six people for fly-tipping in the eight month period and has moved to warn residents ahead of an anticipated increase in incidents following Christmas.

Regulatory services chief Councillor Roger Lees said: "When households buy a new fridge, the old one is left outside for collectors to take. Rogue scrap metal collectors are then taking the fridges, removing the parts that can be sold easily such as the motors and condensers before fly-tipping the rest.

"A lot of residents aren't aware that you can be held responsible if your waste is fly-tipped and traced back to your home."

SPORT

Games 'a boost for whole of the region'

THE whole of the Midlands including Staffordshire will benefit from the 2022 Commonwealth Games, the county council's leader has said.

Councillor Philip Atkins said: "Mountain biking is one of the optional sporting events which could be included at the Games. Cannock Chase has been mentioned as a potential venue, which is not surprising as it is a nationally renowned location for the activity."

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ACCIDENT

Teenage cyclist is seriously injured

A TEENAGE cyclist was seriously injured in an accident in Brereton.

An ambulance service spokeswoman said: "A 15-year-old boy had come off a pushbike after reportedly colliding with a car. He had sustained a number of injuries which included suspected fractures to his pelvis and leg." The boy was airlifted to Birmingham Children's Hospital following the collision in The Levels on Thursday.

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Rare novels book in for £20k plus

Star book at sale

A COLLECTION of rare novels by HG Wells has sold for more than £20,000 at a Black Country auction house – nearly four times its valued price.

The 19 first-edition novels by the science fiction writer totalled £20,240 – with the star of the sale a 1908 first edition of Wells' 'The War in the Air' which sold for £7,500.

The books were sold at Cuttlestones' specialist collectors' sale at Wolverhampton Auction Rooms, with a number of individual tomes selling for several thousands of pounds.

A book specialist from the auction house said they had expected the collection to fetch around £5,000.

'The War in the Air', published by George Bell and Sons was in its rare original dust jacket with blue cloth binding, gold lettering, two pages of adverts at back and along with a story removed from 'The Strand' Magazine 1909 by Wells called 'My First Aeroplane (Alauda Magna)'.

The second most sought-after book – fetching £4,500 – was a first edition copy of Wells' 'Kipps the Story of a Simple Soul'. Published by Macmillan and Co in 1905, the first printing edition was presented in its original green cloth binding and what the auction house said appears to be its rare original dust jacket with Macmillan monograph and 'Six shillings' on the spine.

It wasn't just books that performed well at the sale – another interesting lot in the form of a fragment of vestment with a note attached stating 'Part of the vestment of John Wickliffe, Rector of Lutterworth circa 1370' sold for £450.

Relating to the influential dissident within the Roman Catholic priesthood, nothing like this had ever come up at auction making it impossible to value.

Transport terror team may be based in Brum

BRITISH Transport Police (BTP) counter-terrorism officers may be based in the West Midlands for the first time from next year.

The national force that polices railways and light-rail systems is in the process of recruiting 170 firearm and 'behavioural detection' officers to be based in Birmingham or Manchester.

BTP firearms units are currently based in London but have been patrolling trains and stations in the West Midlands this year. A base for the new unit has not yet been confirmed. It will also include support dogs, specialist equipment, vehicles and staff to support the operations.

Assistant chief constable Alun Thomas said: "Although our firearms units are currently based in London, they have been regularly patrolling trains and stations in places such as Manchester and Birmingham since early this year.

Patrolling

"You may have seen them on trains, or at high profile events like the UEFA Champions League Final in Cardiff.

"But in the current climate, we know how important it is to make sure we have specialist and highly-trained officers in the right place at the right time to keep people safe, which is why we are looking to recruit even more people."

Armed police officers began patrolling trains in the West Midlands in May.

They were called upon in the immediate aftermath of terrorist incidents in London and Manchester, and to events including the UEFA Champions League Final in Cardiff.

ACC Thomas added: "We want the public to be reassured that wherever they go on the rail network, we have highly trained people there to protect them if needed.

"By basing new officers in the Midlands and the North, it allows us to make that an absolute reality. We want to recruit specialist officers, to work in this specialist environment."

Players bring cheer to sick children

Oscar Woodland, aged 13 from Cannock, with Barry Douglas, Diogo Jota, Ruben Neves and Ruben Vinagre

WOLVES stars handed out some early Christmas presents when they dropped in at Wolverhampton's New Cross Hospital.

Ruben Neves, Diogo Jota, Barry Douglas and Ruben Vinagre spent time at the children's ward meeting youngsters and their families for the club's traditional Christmas visit. They spent two hours handing out goody bags and chatting to the starstruck children.

Among those they met were 13-year-old Oscar Woodland, a diehard Wolves fan, as well as his parents Caryn and Andy, from Cannock. An emotional Caryn said: "Oscar's got autism and ADHD so it means a lot for him. It's made his day."

Neil Sansom, a season ticket holder at Molineux for 22 years, said the players had put a smile on everyone's face.

He was there with five-month-old son James, who has bronchitis. Neil said: "It's really good for Wolves to come down, it's a great gesture from them and the club and very much appreciated."

Scottish left back Douglas, who recently discovered his partner was pregnant, said it was a pleasure to make a difference at Christmas.

"We've met a few of the kids and heard their stories, it's nice to make them smile.

"It's rewarding for us too to know we've made someone's day."

Poundland's going strong, workers are reassured

POUNDLAND has told its 18,000 workers their business is in strong shape despite the crisis at its South African parent company, Steinhoff.

An accounting scandal at the South African retail giant has seen its chief executive and chairman both quit while it is having to restate its financial figures for the past two years.

There were recent reports that a credit insurance company, which provides the cover for suppliers to ensure they get paid, was cutting back on its cover for Poundland.

Positive

But the company says that it will also be meeting with insurers to reassure them.

The Willenhall-based discount chain said it is 'a business firing on all cylinders at the moment'.

A company spokesman said: "While we certainly can't predict the consequences for Steinhoff of the events of the last week, Poundland is a profitable, cash-generating business that's currently trading more strongly than it has in years – positive like-for-like sales and real momentum."

The company, with 900 stores, employs more than 700 in the Black Country at its Willenhall headquarters and its major depot at Bilston.

Theatre assistant in winning role

A LEARNING assistant at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre has won a Black Country business award.

Libbie Doyle, aged 25, works as a creative learning assistant at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre. She was named Young Person or Apprentice of the Year at a Black Country Chamber of Commerce Award,

Libbie is a former apprentice at City of Wolverhampton College. And as part of her apprenticeship, she combined working for the theatre with studying for a Level 2 diploma in creative arts.

Libbie, from Wombourne, said: "I chose an apprenticeship as I wanted to learn on-the-job rather than in a classroom and I was able to study modules that would be most beneficial to me in my role."

£15k animals aid

A SAFARI park is celebrating fundraising success in 2017 with more than £15,000 raised for animal charities.

West Midland Safari Park, based in Bewdley, has dished out the money to various animal charities and projects chosen for the vital work.

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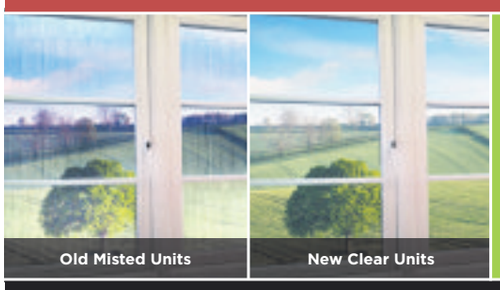

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Councils are given power for higher tax increase

COUNCILS in Staffordshire and the Black Country could raise council tax by up to 5.99 per cent after a government cap was increased.

Many local authorities in the region had already touted rises in their draft budget for 2018-19 but now they have been given the flexibility to go further.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid announced that all councils could increase council tax by up to 2.99 per cent – raising the cap by one per cent.

And those in charge of social care, which includes Staffordshire County Council and the four Black Country councils, could levy a further 2.99 per cent to be ring-fenced for the purpose.

Councils in Staffordshire appear to be more open than their West Midlands counterparts about taking advantage of the higher threshold. Cannock Chase Council would be entitled to raise taxes by 2.99 per cent as it does not directly oversee social care.

Leader George Adamson said: "We were looking at raising our council tax by around two per cent next year.

"We were not aware we would be allowed to increase it by a further one per cent, but we will consider it in January."

Staffordshire County Council is facing a £12 million black hole next year and had already proposed raising council tax by 4.95 per cent. Leader Philip Atkins said the council would 'seriously consider' the further rise.

Facebook 'useful for treatment'

SOCIAL media can be useful to health professionals in the management of coronary heart disease (CHD), according to a trial undertaken by the Heart Centre at University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust.

The cardiac rehabilitation service was supported by the local Clinical Commissioning Group to develop the use of social media in clinical practice. Two pages set up on Facebook resulted in what managers say is a 'greater multidisciplinary approach to patient care within the department'.

Senior therapist Sonya Meigh, who helped to set up the Facebook service, said: "The pages have given us the scope and resources to access wider patient support networks in a way that was previously unobtainable."

M6 Toll restaurant

ROADCHEF has opened the first LEON restaurant on the UK's motorways at the Norton Canes service area on the M6 Toll. To celebrate the launch, drivers were given advice on staying well during the festive season.

Man given pet ban after beating his dog

American bulldog Jeff

A THUG savagely beat a helpless dog after the animal soaked his foot with water on an evening canalside walk, a court heard.

Carl Pugh viciously punched American bulldog Jeff five times, causing outrage among thousands of people when CCTV of the brutal onslaught went viral.

But the 35-year-old claimed he hit the animal after being dragged into the canal at Bilston and footage made 'it look worse than it was'. Pugh was handed a two-year ban from keeping animals and a 12-week community order, with a curfew.

Magistrates told Pugh, who was also ordered to pay £100 costs and an £85 victim surcharge, it was a 'despicable way to treat a dog'.

RSPCA inspector Vicki Taylor said Jeff is set to be rehomed.

Shocking footage showed Pugh grab the dog before repeatedly punching the innocent animal as it lay on the ground near the Wednesbury Oak Loop canal in Bilston on June 28. Pugh was convicted in his absence of causing unnecessary suffering to the dog after failing to turn up for his trial in November.

A warrant was issued for the defendant, of Elizabeth Avenue, Bilston, and he was arrested, and later granted bail by magistrates.

He then failed to turn up for sentencing at Birmingham Magistrates Court and a second arrest warrant was issued earlier this month. Police managed to catch Pugh and he was sentenced for his offending at the same court.

Pugh about to strike again

Mystery death woman had been assaulted

A WOMAN whose death sparked a major police investigation had been assaulted before she died, an inquest in Cannock heard.

Kerry Cast was found dead at her home on July 1 in what the hearing was told were 'highly suspicious circumstances'.

Staffordshire Police's efforts to unravel the mystery of 40-year-old Mrs Cast's death concluded that she had died of 'natural causes'.

Kerry Cast

But the county's senior coroner Andrew Haigh last week recorded an open conclusion, revealing she had suffered a head injury from an assault which 'potentially contributed' to her death.

He said the 'extent of its contribution to (her) death is not clear' and 'the main factor in the death was disease caused by chronic alcohol excess'. The medical cause of death given at the inquest was 'complications of long-standing alcohol misuse (head injury potentially contributing)'.

Mrs Cast's death, five days before her 41st birthday, was initially treated as unexplained.

The former Cannock Chase High School pupil was last seen by her mother Kathy Weaver three days before she was found dead.

Mrs Cast lived alone at home in Herondale, Hednesford – and was only found after two neighbours told police they were concerned about her apparent absence.

Post mortem results returned inconclusive, and officers launched repeated appeals for information, including CCTV images of potential witnesses and also of Mrs Cast herself. Mrs Weaver also issued a public plea for answers.

In October, Staffordshire Police announced its investigation had concluded. A force statement said: "A detailed and complex investigation commenced to understand the circumstances surrounding her death.

"All of the medical evidence is now available and it has been established that the cause of death was complications from a medical issue – natural causes."

Cyclists competing in the National Mountain Bike Championships on Cannock Chase

Cannock ready to welcome Games

CANNOCK Chase Council has warmly welcomed the announcement that Birmingham's bid to stage the 2022 Commonwealth Games has been successful.

The Games, first staged in 1930 and now held on a four-yearly basis, is a world-class multi-sports event with competitions including athletics, swimming, cycling, and boxing.

Council leader Councillor George Adamson said: "We are really pleased the Games are coming to the West Midlands. In particular, it is likely that the mountain bike events will be held on Cannock Chase and so we will be part of the Games."

Tony McGovern, managing director of the council, said: "This is fantastic news, and I want to congratulate Birmingham City Council for developing the West Midlands-based bid.

"The Commonwealth Games will bring millions of visitors and economic benefits for the whole region."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Homes scheme given approval

PLANNERS have agreed to 700 homes, a school and a care home in Stafford, despite fears over the pressure it may bring to GP surgeries.

Borough Council planners gave the green light to Akzo Nobel UK's bid to develop land north of Marston Grange. The scheme will also include a 'local centre'. Fears had been raised that increased traffic would create a 'rat-run' as well as generate other congestion-related issues.

Councillor Christine Baron had objected over the lack of financial investment from the developer to help expand or deliver new medical services.

Health staff pick up top accolade

THE health visiting service delivered by Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent NHS Partnership Trust (SSOTP) has been recognised as 'baby friendly'.

The service has been re-accredited with the Baby Friendly award from children's charity Unicef.

It recognises best practice and the ongoing excellent standards of high quality care being delivered to parents by SSOTP's health visiting teams and community breastfeeding team.

SSOTP director of nursing and quality Rose Goodwin said: "This is a wonderful accolade for the trust."

New venture as business booming

A STAFFORD-based specialist construction firm has announced significant growth as it opens new premises and launches a sister business.

Lordswood Architectural's new premises and its new business Rohaus at Douglas House, Leons Way, Tollgate Industrial Estate, follow a £650,000 finance package from HSBC.

Lordswood specialises in curtain wall and façade work and its new sister retail brand, Rohaus, manufactures aluminium windows and doors. The business won £3 million worth of contracts this year.

Elderly resident is conned out of £500

AN elderly resident was conned out of more than £500 by two bogus traders.

Two men, described as being in their 30s, approached a home in Newman Grove, Rugeley. They said they were there to clear guttering and charged £10 which was agreed.

But afterwards one of the suspects demanded £500 – claiming he had repaired some brickwork.

The fee was handed over but no work had been carried out.

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Atomic Ned pair at literary event

NED'S Atomic Dustbin frontman Jonn Penney will perform a show in Wolverhampton as part of the city's Literature Festival.

He will be joined at the Slade Room event by fellow band member Rat, Ned's Atomic Dustbin's guitarist.

Entitled Jonn's Atomic Memoir Won't Write Itself, the show will see the pair perform 'newly interpreted acoustic versions' of their songs.

In between musical numbers, audience members are invited to ask questions.

The event will take place on January 27. Tickets are now on sale, priced at £14.30.

Business festival tickets available

TICKETS to confirmed events being run as part of a new business festival will be available from its website from January 15.

The Black Country Business Festival, run in association with the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and supported by the University of Wolverhampton and Talbots Law, will run between April 23 and May 4.

Around 100 events are expected to take place over the festival fortnight.

For information, to apply to run an event, or for tickets from January 15, visit www.blackcountrybusinessfestival.com or email hello@blackcountrybusinessfestival.com

Scottish frolics at Burns Night

A BRUM pub is holding a literary-themed Burns Night in January.

The Gunmakers Arms in Bath Street will be offering Scottish short stories and poetry on January 25 from 7pm to 9pm. David Wake will read from Crossing The Bridge, his new political thriller with a Scottish edge, which is being launched on the night.

Free tickets need to be booked in advance from www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/burns-night-tales-tick ets-41367347851

£10k raised for Burma refugees

ALMOST £10,000 has been raised by a Muslim group in aid of refugees fleeing Burma. Charity Wolverhampton Muslim Forum held a fundraiser at Lea Road United Reform Church for the Rohingya refugees.

The event included food stalls, a bouncy castle and raffles. In attendance was Deputy Mayor Phil Page and Deputy Mayoress Elaine Hadley.

Staff step up to help Feed a Family call

Ali Mantle, Rob Colbourne, Jo Mellor and Tracy Caizzo from People

A LEADING training provider rallied around to support the Express & Star's Feed a Family This Christmas appeal.

Staff at Performance Through People (PTP) collected food, toiletries and other essentials to help support a number of food banks and other good causes across the region to ensure that families didn't feel the pinch over the festive season.

Our appeal was backed from employees at the company who donated festive items such as scarves and gloves, as well as basics such as canned goods, pasta and long life milk.

Gill Durkin, business development director at PTP, which has five training centres including ones in Walsall, Cannock and Wolverhampton, said they were excited to be continuing their support for local food banks.

"As a business we are keen to support the local communities we serve, and have contact with a number of food banks supporting clients that may have access to some of our courses. Our employees have been fantastic donating presents such as scarves, hats and gloves as well as non-perishables. and toiletries – they think it is a fantastic cause and we are pleased to support it," she added.

Overwhelmed by your kindness in our appeal

THE final delivery of your generous donations for the Express & Star's Feed A Family This Christmas appeal has been made, bringing some much-needed festive cheer to the community.

We have been completely overwhelmed by the kindness shown by people across the Black Country and Staffordshire during the six-week campaign.

In total, we've had in excess of 12,000 items donated by readers, ranging from food and toiletries to children's toys and winter clothing.

We've received mountains of festive food, such as mince pies, chocolates and Christmas puddings, as well as basics including canned goods, long-life milk, fruit juice, pasta and rice. Non-food items such as toiletries, baby supplies, new socks and small presents have also been welcomed.

Our single biggest donation has been an amazing contribution of £2,000 worth of supplies handed over by former Goodyear workers. The cash was used to buy everything from tins of vegetables, noodle pots and pasta to bottles of squash, long-life milk and jars of coffee.

There was also an array of sweet treats including chocolate selection boxes for youngsters and vital toiletries including toothbrushes, shampoo and deodorant.

The money came from the Goodyear workers 5/344 Transport and General Workers' Union Benevolent Fund.

Unite branch chairman Cyril Barrett said: "It was our privilege to be able to support this wonderful, so badly needed, project in Wolverhampton and the Black Country."

We've also had two large anonymous donations which totalled almost 2,900 items from a community organisation in Staffordshire, who wanted to help those less fortunate. We've been really touched by how people have taken the appeal into their hearts and gone the extra mile.

Needy bag help from family store

Neetu Mann with husband Kirpal Mann, Rajinda Batth and Janet Freeman

PILES of food were donated to charity with money collected from 5p bag charges.

Owners of Pinson Convenience Store in Willenhall, Neetu Mann, 52, and Kirpar Mann, 57 – who run the family store with their five children – have collected £70 since January from the charge on plastic bags and then added their own contributions with loose change they found to donate food to the less fortunate.

It is part of the Express and Star's Feed a Family campaign where food, toiletries and warm clothes are donated to food banks across the Black Country.

As part of their collection, they have tinned food, crisps, cereal, coffee, mince pies, pasta, biscuits and gravy.

Neetu said: "We said from day one we did not want to keep the change from the bag charges. It is good to help every little bit you can and we hope this will inspire others."

Last year they collected £80 and added £70 of their own money so they had £150 to spend on toys which they wrapped up and gave to children at Birmingham Children's Hospital for Christmas.

An amazing 12,000 items are collected

Diane Davies

THANK you, thank you, thank you, *writes deputy editor Diane Davies*. Thanks to every single person and group who made a donation and to those who collected items for our Feed A Family at Christmas campaign.

So many people will benefit from the amazing number of items collected. Thank you on the behalf of the homeless, families and households desperately relying on food banks and the women and children being helped by The Haven refuge this year. Having collected more than 9,000 food, toiletries and other items when we first launched the campaign last Christmas I had a secret number in my head this time of how many I hoped we would get this year.

I had my heart set on 10,000 but could not know for sure how our readers and local communities would respond to the campaign. I never dreamed we would actually collect more than 12,000 items – the total has been amazing and completely overwhelming.

How public, groups and stars rushed in with help

November 4: Lisa Riley launches Feed a Family appeal and urges readers to back the campaign. Waitrose in Wolverhampton and the Co-op in Codsall both come on board by hosting donation boxes.
November 6: Olympian Joe Clarke shows his support for the second year running and praises the cause.
November 8: Antiques Roadshow expert Will Farmer gives the campaign the thumbs-up
November 10: Staff and pupils at Wood End Primary School in Wednesfield start collecting as they pledged to support the appeal for the second year in a row.
November 11: The Express & Star receives a huge donation of more than 1,200 items of food from rice to biscuits from a kind-hearted Staffordshire organisation
November 17: Saddlers Shopping Centre in Walsall announces it will be collecting donations for the second year running
November 20: Slade's Dave Hill pledges support, says he enjoys helping to make a difference.
November 21: Youngsters, who are part of the HeadStart programme,at the Bob Jones Community Hub in Blakenhall pledge items for the collection.
November 22: Pop rock stars The Vamps throw their weight behind the campaign during a visit to switch on the Christmas lights at Merry Hill.
November 24: Cannock market trader Anne Franks offers to use her weekly pop-up stall at Cannock Indoor Market to collect items for Feed a Family.
November 27: Panto stars Ian Adams and Adam C Booth jumped forward to support the appeal when they popped into the Express & Star offices to meet staff.
November 27: Healthwatch groups come on board by saying they will be collecting donations in Wolverhampton, Walsall and Staffordshire
November 30: Corrie's Antony Cotton becomes the latest celebrity to back the campaign as he switches on Stourbridge's Christmas lights
December 2: The cast of Robin Hood and The Babes in the Wood give their backing to the appeal
December 4: Pupils at Oakham Primary School in Oldbury hold an assembly and organise a collection
December 6: Dudley North MP Ian Austin donates four boxes of food, toiletries and baby supplies.
December 6: Walsall Training Centre staff hand over dozens of donations
December 7: Gold medalist Hugh Porter champions Feed a Family This Christmas
December 8: Former Goodyear workers give the appeal a huge boost by donating £2,000 of food and toiletries for the good causes.
December 9: The Bishop of Dudley speaks out about the importance of food banks and hands over goodies.
December 12: We receive a second anonymous donation containing a staggering1,690 items of food.
December 14: Pupils from Westcroft School in Wolverhampton deliver their donations to our offices.
December 13: Performance Through People hand over festive items such as scarves and gloves, as well as basics.
December 14: Workers at Assa Abloy in Willenhall drop off two van-loads .
December 21: The final deliveries are made to the food banks in time for Christmas.

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Council buys land for the final act of road project

A MAJOR road project which will see the final section of Lichfield's southern bypass completed is progressing. The county council is now beginning the process of buying land along the route.

The £17.5million scheme will connect the A5127 Birmingham Road with the A5206 London Road. It will involve building an underpass beneath the Cross City rail line. The 670 metre stretch is being funded by a developer, the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and the Government.

In October, the Department for Transport announced £5 million would be allocated to the scheme. The GBSLEP is now awaiting the business case to be submitted with a view to allocating £2.3m of its Growth Deal funding. The work, due to be completed by 2020, will be done in such a way that a restored Lichfield canal could also pass under the Cross City Line.

The new road will support a new housing development and new primary school in addition to easing city centre congestion. It is hoped a planning application will be approved in early 2018 with work due to begin in late summer.

County Council economic growth leader Mark Winnington said it was an essential part of Lichfield's growth plans.

Stay warm plea issued to elderly

ELDERLY and vulnerable people are being advised by GPs to keep warm during cold weather to reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

The elderly, frail, or anyone with a pre-existing condition is recommended to heat their home to at least 18C and are advised to get flu jabs.

Dr Mo Huda, a Rugeley GP and chairman of Cannock Chase CCG, said: "Heart attacks increase almost immediately after a cold snap and nationally account for two in five winter excess deaths, and more people are admitted to hospital with heart conditions in the cold. It's therefore important that anyone who is more vulnerable should try and stay warm."

More details on the NHS Choices website.

Regular ramble

CHASE Ramblers meet as usual on Saunday for an eight-mile moderate walk on Cannock Chase. Departure time is Hednesford railway station car park, Anglesey Street, at 9am prompt. Call Gary on 01543 574036.

Milestone marked with £2m contract

Tony Hague, left, and David Fox

A FAST-growing manufacturer marked half a century in business by securing £2m of new contracts.

PP Control and Automation celebrated the milestone after racking up sales worth more than £22 million in 2017.

Located in a 55,000 sq ft facility in Cheslyn Hay, the company supplies electrical control systems, cable harnesses and sub-contract manufacturing for many of the world's largest machinery builders.

It has enjoyed a major surge in demand for outsourcing work – carrying out a range of manufacturing services for client companies – with interest coming from as far away as Iceland.

The business was formed by chairman David Fox, operating from a 1,200 sq ft unit in Walsall with just a handful of staff and supplying small volume electrical controls and distribution equipment.

The first employee Frank Cox still works for the company today.

Managing director Tony Hague said: "2017 has been a major year for us, not just in terms of our 'big birthday', but also in terms of laying the foundations for the next five decades."

He added: "We now have a five-year plan of taking turnover from £22m in 2017 to £40m in 2022 and the £1m factory extension we completed in August now gives us the additional space and world-class logistics and materials department to help us achieve that."

Chairman Mr Fox said: "Turning 50 is a great achievement for the company and we have to say thank you to our staff for their hard work, their commitment and their desire."

Help reach cash goal for this brave little girl Isla

A FUNDRAISING push has been launched by the family of a young girl who is fighting a rare form of cancer.

Isla Austin was diagnosed with high-risk neuroblastoma on her first birthday – and now her family are looking to raise £150,000 to fund experimental treatment in America.

Former Wolves goalkeeper Matt Murray, who is a family friend, has backed the appeal and urged others to do the same.

Isla has undergone numerous gruelling procedures lasting more than a year, including chemotherapy, radiotherapy, stem cell harvests, surgery and immunotherapy. But that has not knocked the two-year-old's appetite for life.

Isla who has a twin sister Lottie and older brother Finn, four, continues to smile and giggle despite her treatment. Her mother Anna, 37, who went to Dormston School in Sedgley, has had to quit her job to help look after Isla who has regular trips to Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Inspiration

Anna has paid tribute to her battling daughter's resilience and thanked everyone who has donated to the fundraising push – which has already raised more than £20,000 in just four days. The family needs to top £155,000 by the end of February.

Anna, who now lives in St Albans with her children and husband Rick, said: "Isla is absolutely amazing and she's our inspiration – she is so courageous, so brave. Children are so resilient.

"At every step of the way she's embraced this and done exactly what the consultants have asked for. She still smiles and giggles when she's in hospital even though she has gone through such a tough time. The donations are overwhelming and very humbling – it has taken us by surprise. We're a bit astonished really and truly grateful to everybody and want to thank everyone for their support."

While Isla is currently in remission from cancer, youngsters with neuroblastoma – the same disease which young Sunderland fan Bradley Lowery suffered from – have a 50 per cent chance of a relapse. And relapsed neuroblastoma has a less than 1 in 10 chance of survival. Murray, 36, lived with Anna's aunt and uncle Jan and Peter Morris from 1997 to 2003 in Penn, after leaving school. He said: "They're all amazing, a really close knit family.

Isla was diagnosed with high-risk neuroblastoma

Isla with twin sister Lottie and brother Finn

Support from ex-Wolves keeper Matt Murray

"Anna is in the same school year as me and we've all been friends ever since. Being a parent myself what Anna and Rick are going through must be so hard. Isla is such a happy little girl, always smiling, she's amazing and she's a fighter. The whole family are great people. Her mum spends a lot of time in hospital with her and when I speak to her you can always hear little Isla in the background. If we can raise this money and get the family over there then she really deserves it. Wolves fans are fantastic, generous and caring people, we've all seen what they've done to help Carl Ikeme and football fans in general can make such a difference."

To donate visit www.justgiving.comcampaigns/charity/solvingkidscancer/islaaustin?social_utm_term=u4kq7rjiy

NEWS IN BRIEF

Animal charity in turkey farm fight

AN animal rights group has joined the protest against a controversial turkey farm near Penkridge.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have set up a petition against the plans for four turkey rearing buildings at Toft Farm, Levedale Road, and is calling on South Staffs District Council to reject the plan.

The scheme was put forward by Holt Farms, which would have space for 20,000 birds. A petition has been signed. Now PETA has joined the list of opposition.

A demonstration against the proposals takes place in Victoria Park, Stafford, on January 20.

Speeding up the broadband process

STAFFORDSHIRE'S economy leader says the government drive to connect all UK properties to high speeds by 2020 could help to find solutions for properties without current access.

The superfast Staffordshire broadband scheme currently ensures 95 per cent of county properties have high speed connectivity, rising to 96 before the end of 2018.

County Council's economic growth leader Mark Winnington said: "We are absolutely committed to finding solutions for the remaining four per cent in the county."

Leisure centre under new control

A LEISURE centre has officially transferred to new management after closing for winter.

The King Edward VI Leisure Centre in Lichfield will be managed by Staffordshire County Council and will reopen as King Edward VI Sports Centre on January 8. The site will form part of the council's school facilities and will be available to local clubs to use on a lettings basis.

The synthetic football pitch will be available for regular bookings, from Monday to Friday throughout the year.

Water firm awarded £38m for sewer work

SEVERN Trent Water is being rewarded for doing better than expected in reducing sewer flooding. Regulator Ofwat said it would receive £38.4 million as an out-performance payment.

All water companies agreed to improve their performance for 2015-20 based on customer consultation. Under-performers are penalised while over-performers receive payments under Ofwat's outcome delivery incentives programme.

IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Crime is crime – in any language

HERE'S a bit of news to warm the cockles of the heart over Christmas. Do you remember the police force in Nottinghamshire that decided wolf-whistling was a "hate crime"? Well the great news is that the one-year trial has been so successful it is being made a permanent fixture.

Taking photographs without consent and verbal abuse are also classed as hate crimes, so it is just as well these new rules weren't being trialled in West Bromwich a few weeks ago. Some of the language used by Albion fans towards Tony Pulis would have made a docker blush.

It's a strange situation when police chiefs decide what is and isn't a crime. In the old days governments made the laws, and the police simply enforced them, so I'm obviously behind the curve on this one. Still, where Nottingham leads, the rest follow, and I dare say we'll see a national crackdown on wolf-whistling in the next year or too.

The logical conclusion is that Nottinghamshire Police are so hot they have totally eradicated all major crime, and are now able to focus on the trivial stuff. But it seems this might not quite be the case.

Just a few weeks ago, the county's police and crime commissioner Paddy Tipping revealed that officers may not investigate shoplifting offences in future to cut costs. Great news for light-fingered low-life, but not so good for shopkeepers who would prefer customers to actually pay for their festive shopping.

Defending the move, Mr Tipping said officers didn't bother with attempted car break-ins, either, unless the victim was particularly vulnerable.

"Is shoplifting as important as investigating a serious sexual assault?" he asked. "It is not." Maybe. But it is a sight more important than wolf-whistling, wouldn't you say?

❐❐❐

FOR all the bad press, I'm quite a fan of budget airline RyanAir. Yes its planes are cramped and the colour schemes migraine inducing, and the endless announcements about cut-price cigarettes and pre-packaged foods infuriating.

But it has brought foreign travel within reach of millions who would otherwise not get the chance, and for punctual short-haul flights at bargain prices, it does exactly what it says on the tin.

But how can it justify charging Lichfield electrician Darren Bliss £110 to correct an error on the tickets caused by predictive phone text? The flight itself cost just £65, and the admin costs would be minimal. The company says it deters people from selling tickets on the black market. It would put me off booking them at all.

Corbyn's PM assertion relies on a snap election

Prince Philip – good company, sharp as a knife and with a keen sense of humour

Jeremy Corbyn – air of desperation in comment on being PM by next year

Lord Malloch-Brown – why him leading a campaign against Brexit is good news

No Jeremy, years are against you

THIS year's Humbuggery Award for mean, grasping and cheapskate yuletide telly goes to the Beeb for the Detectorists Christmas Special which was no such thing, merely a repeat of an earlier episode. Ebenezer would be proud of you, Auntie.

THERE is an air of desperation in Jeremy Corbyn's recent assertion that he will "probably" be prime minister by this time next year. The next General Election may not be until May 2022. If he won then, Mr Corbyn would enter Number Ten just before his 73rd birthday and would be 78 at the end of his first term. His only realistic hope is a snap election in the next couple of years. Even if the polls were for him, the years are against him. Probably.

I'M enjoying The Crown (Netflix), even though we don't know how much of it is factual. Was the party-animal Duke of Edinburgh really given the title "Prince Philip" as part of a deal to make him behave? For what it's worth, I once interviewed the Duke in his office at Buckingham Palace. We were alone for about an hour and he was good company, sharp as a knife and had a keen sense of humour. But my abiding impression was that here was a man who very rarely heard the word "no".

HIS Serene Magnificence the Right Honourable The Lord Malloch-Brown KCMG PC is to lead a campaign against Brexit. This is excellent news for Brexit. Remember those howls of rage when Sir Martin Moore-Bick was appointed head of the Grenfell Tower inquiry? The people demanded to know how a white middle-class retired judge could possible relate to them. Expect more of the same. Malloch-Brown is a double-barrelled product of Marlborough and

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

Cambridge who was never elected to anything by anyone. He was appointed to the House of Lords to serve in Gordon Brown's cabinet. That government ended 10 years ago yet milord still wields power. So let him present his plans to overturn the result of our EU Referendum. Let him try to convince us that someone like him, a gilded veteran of the diplomatic corps and the World Bank, a member of the globetrotting elite and consultant to big businesses, knows anything about the life of a fisherman from Grimsby or a foundry worker in Wolverhampton. Every time a Malloch-Brown, or a Tony Blair, or a Gina Miller tries to tell us what is good for us, it's worth another million votes for Brexit. The toffs versus the people. Bring it on.

AFTER last week's item on the benefits of winter tyres, a reader says his new 4x4 seems "invincible." Oh, beware. In my misspent youth with the Territorial Army, we spent a lot of time digging "invincible" 4x4s out of mud, slush and snow. My troop's personal best was three Land Rovers in a queue, stuck up to their wheel arches. We had to bang on the door of the Royal Armoured Corps and borrow a tracked vehicle to pull them out. Believe me, when the snowman brings the snow what you really need is a Scorpion tank.

DELIGHTED to see gin has overtaken rum, whisky and vodka to become the nation's favourite spirit. In his glorious Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams says about 85 per cent of all known worlds in the Galaxy have invented a drink called jynnan tonyx, or gee-N'N-T'N-ix, or jinond-o-nicks, "or any one of a thousand variations on this phonetic theme." G&T is a pan-galactic success, so subtle, so complex, so effervescently effective in calming the universe and making all life-forms nicer. The trouble is that the universe, being infinite, just doesn't know when to stop.

SNOWFLAKE kids have been blamed for objecting to a weather message issued by University College London to let students know the place would remain open despite the snow. It went: "Dreaming of a white campus? Our campuses will be open and operating fully today." For anyone of a certain age "white campus" is a clever play on the words "White Christmas" from the much-loved Bing Crosby song of 1942. But some students denounced the message as racist and fascist, and the uni scrapped it, apologising with a grovelling: "We chose our words very poorly." Damn right. Parade the guilty men and women in public and send them for re-education. And for the benefit of any students reading this who are a bit shaky on modern history, Bing Crosby was Adolf Hitler's cultural attache and White Christmas was, of course, the marching song of the Waffen SS. Make sure you include this in your next essay.

SCROOGE was a grasping, covetous sinner but he hounded his debtors regardless of race or creed. He may have been a miserable old git but he was an equal-opportunities miserable old git. Scrooge has served us well every Christmas since 1843 and I see no good reason to muck around with his character now. Incidentally, kids, I'm pretty sure Ebenezer Scrooge would have voted for Brexit. Hiss the villain.

TALKING POINT

Turkey time gone – now it's back to just JAM

SO Happy New Year everyone, yay! We'll soon have got through the festivities, the euphoria will then be a distant memory, and the winter gloom will be back upon us.

Millions of us will be facing JAM financial repercussions (just about managing), having begged, borrowed and stolen to get the money together for the season of goodwill.

Why do we celebrate the turning of time quite so vehemently when we enter the next instalment of 365 days nearer towards our ultimate demise?

The only common link is that we are all getting older. It is a time of reflection and of course a time to look forward, what can we do this year to improve on things last year?

Like a confessional, the mistakes and heartaches of 2017 can be wiped clean and we promise ourselves a better 2018. But is it really that easy?

Sure move on and try to make things better, but it doesn't all disappear with the wave of a magic wand with resolutions written on it.

One year I truly went for it. I sat down with an A3-lined paper pad and listed things I wanted to change in my life.

Get a girl, sort out my teeth, keep fit, don't drink as much, don't swear as much... they were all there on my resolutions list and I think out of what might have been about 15 or so, I managed two.

Yes, I'm now happily married and my teeth, while not sparklingly white, are definitely better, but the battle of the bulge goes on, and the air turns as blue, just as frequently.

So being realistic is perhaps the way to go with resolutions, after all, unless you are absolutely intent on changing your whole life, no-one on this earth is going to do everything they want.

In the words of John Lennon: "Life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans..."

Start small – help people, try smiling more often, drink more water etc, you might not change the world, you might not change yourself, but you may feel better about things, which is a starting point.

Today is the first day of the rest of your life. But personally, that doesn't have to happen on January 1, it's whenever you want.

The most successful resolution I had was giving up smoking, January 1, 1991 and I've stuck to it ever since, even when I've been trapped in a Transit van with five other people smoking like chimneys on a trip around Europe...but that's another story!

GRAEME ANDREW

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Criminal gangs warned: We're gunning for you

FORTY organised crime gangs are on the radar of detectives in Staffordshire with police chiefs warning: 'We're coming after you'.

At least 11 criminal gangs have been disrupted and more than 50 mobsters snared by Staffordshire's Major and Organised Crime Department in one of its most successful years in the war against crime bosses.

Head of the elite unit Detective Superintendent Simon Duffy said drugs remained the biggest industry for gangs but revealed many were using 'legitimate' businesses to mask their criminal enterprises.

"Their end game is always around status or money," he said. "They are opportunist and sometimes they are far from organised.

Staffordshire Police on a drugs raid in Chadsmoor

Slavery

"There is no definitive for what their crimes may be – it could be drugs, it could be modern day slavery, it could be illegal waste dumping.

"We maintain a list of organised crime gangs and in recent years we are getting smarter about the way we manage them. We are on the front foot."

Mr Duffy said police aimed to 'prevent, pursue, and disrupt' around 40 gangs operating in and around the county.

Among the successes was a cocaine and amphetamine racket that operated in Cannock, Stafford, and Walsall which was smashed by detectives and saw five gangs across the Midlands hit and 23 people sent to jail. Kingpins John Appleton and Michael O' Mahoney, from Cannock, got 14 years each while their henchmen and associates are serving between eight years and 14 months behind bars.

Mr Duffy said drugs trafficking remained the most attractive 'industry' for gangs. He said: "We have seen what used to be called 'legal highs' flood the market and even certain chemicals being sold. These people cannot resist the chance to make easy cash by exploiting often vulnerable people."

He revealed 'a lot of work' had gone into working with councils and other public bodies to identify 'legitimate' businesses being run by crime bosses to launder money.

He said: "Gangs are clever and they try to legitimise their money by legitimate means. There have been cases where public bodies have been using services which are a front to crime gangs. We are putting a stop to that."

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Donate to help MS treatment

MY older sister was diagnosed with MS when we were in our early 30s and the news came as a blow to my family. MRI tests had only just been invented but no one was offered treatments because there weren't any.

We've made tremendous strides in MS research but with 100,000 people affected in the UK, what we really need is to find a way to stop MS.

That's why I'm supporting the MS Society. Its Christmas appeal is aiming to raise £250,000 to fund three landmark trials and turn existing drugs into treatments for MS.

I'd love for readers to join me, and donate at www.mssociety.org.uk/elf.

ALUN ARMSTRONG
Actor

Tune in for event to support charity

IT'S the policy of the radio show I host for Black Country Radio to each year take a charity to support. The year 2018 will see us linking up with Parkinson's Society and I will be working with performers Pete Brookes and John Langford to set up a series of events to help support the charity.

The main event will also be connected to this year's Black Country Festival when we will be taking the Omma n Chain to the Lighthouse in Wolverhampton for a day-long festival of music, storytelling and spoken word.

It will feature performances and invited bands playing in the courtyard.

We hope to create a market atmosphere so it could be you promoting your group or product, maybe something you wish to sell. There will be a small charge for space, which will go directly to the charity. John, Pete and Bren Hawthorne will organise all the music and I hope to have someone who would like to run a children's creative section and a comedic magician.

To have a stall or for more information please email b.dakin@aston.ac.uk

DR B DAKIN
AKA Billy Spakemon

Blair should accept referendum result

TONY Blair's latest rant confirms what an arrogant undemocratic self opinionated autocratic type of leader he was. In his latest statement, he claims the Labour Parties take on Brexit is the same as the Tories' and just as divided. He adds that Labour should come out in opposition to leaving the EU, regardless of what the electorate voted for.

Why should the Labour Party or anyone else have any trust in what Blair claims?

I believe he should shut up and accept the outcome of the referendum. And his time would be better spent suggesting exit strategies that would be best for all, rather than trying to make a mockery of the democratic system.

PAUL WITTON
Cannock

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
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Why elderly cope better in the snow

MANY of the regular correspondents to this page will remember what the real winter of 1962-63 was like.

It snowed on Boxing Day, and the temperature never rose above freezing until Easter Monday. I can't remember schools closing for a day. I was a paperboy, out on my round at 7am.

My dad used to warm up my gloves in the oven before I went out. There was no double glazing in classrooms, and we were still out on the field playing football.

It was easier walking in the ice-free roads than the frozen pavements as there was not the same volume of traffic as now. That is why you now see more pensioners out than young people – they have seen it all before!

DAVID STEELE
Wolverhampton

Campaign's aim is to fund million eye ops

I AM writing to let readers know about Sightsavers' A Million Miracles fundraising campaign that I am supporting.

The campaign aims to fund one million cataract operations that will restore, save and protect people's sight in some of the poorest parts of the world. I am asking donors and members of the public to donate to the Sightsavers cataract work and help reach the final miracle.

Money raised appeal will be matched by the UK government, pound for pound, until January 9, 2018 so your gift will go even further.

The matched funding will go towards Sightsavers' projects in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Visit donate.sightsavers.org/smxpatron/uk/donate.html to donate and support the work of Sightsavers.

MELANIE SYKES
Ambassador, Sightsavers

Peril of prawn sarnies

WATCHING Match of the Day on TV last night, I was not surprised by the large gaps in the crowd, given the inclement weather. What was surprising was the 'official figure' given in the newspapers. They had 74,798 there! Presumably, whenever the television cameras showed crowd shots, the missing people were all off tucking into prawn sandwiches at the time!

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Bowled over by a night of skittles

Etching Hill WI

MEMBERS have enjoyed a varied and active month; firstly at a Skittles evening where, with much fun and laughter, three teams bowled, or occasionally, bounced the ball along the alley in pursuit of that illusive nine pin strike.

A pit-stop break for supper and with much vigour the teams played their final turn, resulting in Team B being declared the winners.

The following week a group of intrepid explorers boarded a mini bus from Etching Hill Village Hall and travelled, firstly to Bridgemere Garden Centre and then onto Arley Hall, Cheshire. Late afternoon tea was followed by a stroll around the seasonally decorated and candlelit rooms of the Hall, whilst listening to carols being sung by the Bridgewater Singers choir.

The Red Lion on the Green at Longdon was the venue for the lunch club, where the diners enjoyed good fayre and companionship.

Christmas was celebrated at a private function amidst the gothic surroundings of Hawkesyard Hall.

A three-course meal of delicious food was followed by a Christmas quiz, recitals, pass the parcel party game and Secret Santa gifts. The evening was brought to a close with the singing of Christmas carols. President Ann Ingleby wished everyone a safe journey home and looked forward to seeing the Members in the new year.

Festive songs mix with Christmas meal

Betty Cooper, Christine Eccleshall, Sheila Yard, Alan Eccleshall, Pat Preece

Cannock Chase Ladies' Probus Club

THE Christmas Luncheon was celebrated at the Barns Restaurant, Cocksparrow Lane, Huntington, on December 14.

Chairman Sheila Yard, welcomed everyone present and congratulated them on arriving safely considering the wintry weather conditions.

Pat Preece said Grace after which the ladies enjoyed an excellent Christmas dinner accompanied by a glass of wine or soft drink, as a gift from the Probus club.

After the Loyal Toast a short business meeting took place.

Mrs Yard, then introduced and welcomed Christine and Alan Eccleshall who were making a return visit to entertain the ladies with Christmas songs from a bygone age. The ladies joined Christine and Alan in The 12 Days of Christmas.

The vote of thanks was given by Betty Cooper who complimented Christine and Alan for their unaccompanied singing and their selection of Christmas music.

Mrs Yard thanked everyone for attending and wished them all a peaceful and Happy Christmas. The club meets on the last Thursday in the month at The Barns, For membership enquiries call 01543 505183.

Creature treats all boxed up

Cannock Chase & District Townswomen

AT a recent meeting a lovely Christmas hamper was put together by the ladies of Cannock Chase & District TG for Rosedene Rescue Centre to provide some little treats at this special time of year.

The next meeting will be on January 16, at 7.30pm at St Luke's School, New Penkridge Road Cannock.

Box of treats for animals

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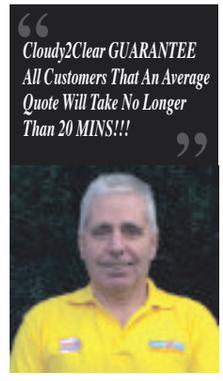

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Celebration honours charity contributions

THE work of Staffordshire's charities and the difference they make to their communities has been celebrated.

Local Charities Day put small, local charities and community groups into the spotlight, helping them demonstrate the great work they do.

Councillor Gill Heath, cabinet member for communities at Staffordshire County Council said: "The voluntary, community and charity sector play a vital role in helping make Staffordshire a great place to live and it's wonderful that we have a day to celebrate their contributions.

"Ten volunteer groups from Staffordshire have also been honoured with Her Majesty The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and I'm delighted to shine a spotlight on them."

Spotlight

Among the winners are Staffordshire Women's Aid. Chief executive Dickie James said: "Our volunteers work tirelessly staffing our 24-hour helpline, 365 days a year which is making a positive difference to so many lives of women and children who have lived with violence and abuse."

The county council works with a consortium comprising Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services and Support Staffordshire to help grow and support the voluntary sector and help communities to stay independent for longer. In addition, 392 voluntary and community organisations working in the council's priority areas of health, families, place and youth have been supported to start up and grow.

Charities across Staffordshire can also access new funding through the Crowdfund Staffordshire website. The county council has alsolaunched a Children and Families fund.

From left, Phil Pusey, SCVYS chief executive, Dickie James, Staffordshire Women's Aid chief executive Lana Bellinger, Alzheimer's drop-in, Michael Greatorex, county council chairman, Heather Johnson, Alzheimer's drop-in, George Fargher, CREST

100 more beds for hospital

NEARLY 100 extra beds will be made available in the new year to tackle winter pressures at Walsall Manor Hospital, it has been revealed.

Bosses have identified wards and departments that could accommodate up to 97 beds and trollies, although some areas will be opened only if the Manor is under 'extreme' pressure. The measures are part of Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust's winter plan for 2017-18.

Philip Thomas-Hands, the trust's chief operating officer, will have to sign off permission for the extra space to be opened up for patients. He said: "We have additional beds that we can use for emergency cases if necessary and these will be reviewed by our capacity on a daily basis."

Initially, 48 beds could be made available in surgical wards 10 and 11, ward seven for cardiology, ward 20c for day case patients, and ward 26 for gynaecology.

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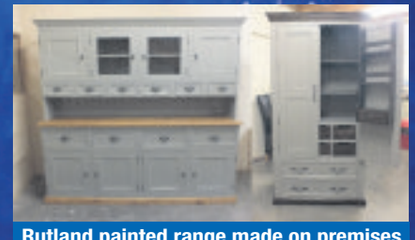

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In a lather to raise vital hospice funds

Martyn Harrison, Chris Hawkins and Miguel Campos of Advanta taking part in the car wash

A DAY of freezing cold fundraising saw cash collected for Katharine House Hospice.

Cannock-based food packaging company Advanta held a managers' car wash at its base on Walkmill Lane, with staff and family members braving the cold to raise £165 for the hospice.

It was part of a month-long spell of charity activity which it is hoped will raise as much as £1,500 towards maintaining and developing the much-valued Weston Road facility.

Funds from the car wash will be added to £443 already raised from Advanta's recent bake-off and Christmas jumper day.

Miguel Campos, export sales manager at Advanta, said: "It's been cold, soapy and hilarious, but it's been so worth it to raise money for Katharine House,.

"Everyone at Advanta wants to give back to this organisation, to show our support and gratitude."

Action call by MP on fly-parking by lorries

CANNOCK Chase MP Amanda Milling has stepped up calls for action to tackle fly-parking by HGVs.

The MP raised the long-standing issue in Parliament and demanded the Government and local authorities take action to tackle the problem faced by residents and businesses in and around Rugeley.

By Simon Stone

Residential streets and business parks find themselves becoming makeshift overnight lorry parks due to a lack of suitable HGV parking and facilities in the area. She said serious nuisance and disruption was caused by HGVs as drivers arrive early for their delivery slot or run out of hours on their tachometer and have to park up.

Ms Milling said: "Residents and businesses in Rugeley face real issues as a result of HGV fly-parking. Such issues include blocked roads and litter left behind.

"It is also a real issue for the drivers themselves as they are forced to park up with no facilities or toilets available. Rugeley simply doesn't have the space to accommodate large numbers of HGVs waiting to make their deliveries," she said.

The MP has been lobbying government, county and district councils and Amazon urging each to play their part in addressing this problem. She wants more HGV parking and facilities, more effective enforcement and is urging planners not to allow any more distribution centres and warehouses on the Power Station site.

The Conservative MP said there had been positive talks with Amazon. "Amazon have done additional work to their site in order to help to accommodate more lorries and also have plans in place to create parking for the HGVs delivering to their site safely."

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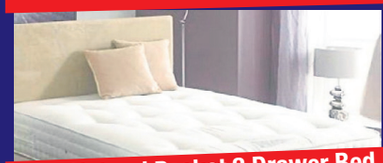
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Warning over rail changes

RAIL users are warned current timetable changes for Christmas will continue into the early new year.

Track upgrade work and different travel patterns mean changes over the festive period will still be in effect on January 2.

Timetable alterations have been in place across a number of routes from Christmas Eve and the frequency of some train services will be reduced over the holiday period.

Network Rail will be carrying out improvement works across the network at Birmingham New Street, Liverpool Lime Street and on the West Coast Main Line near Rugby.

Andrew Conroy, customer services director at London Northwestern Railway, said: "Services are always busier over the Christmas and New Year period and we don't want any of our passengers to be left behind."

Go to londonnorthwestern railway.co.uk/upgrades

Changes will affect services to Rugeley Trent Valley

Firm hopes to put block on 'fatbergs'

THEY are known as fatbergs – giant underground clumps formed from all kinds of unmentionables.

Severn Trent is now urging businesses and householders to be more aware of what they flush down the drains.

It comes amid continued problems with people sending oil down the plughole, which form with toilet wet wipes to create massive congealed lumps that block drains and sewers.

The company has to deal with more than 50,000 blockages a year across the Midlands and says about two thirds of those are caused by people putting the wrong things down drains.

It is now working with major food chains to help prevent sewer blockages and fatbergs. Severn Trent is helping to educate staff about what should not be poured down sinks and drains and is installing grease traps in restaurants. It also wants householders to stop flushing wet wipes, sanitary towels and nappies down toilets as they are not designed to disintegrate like toilet paper.

A Severn Trent worker with a 'fatberg'

Earlier this year, a fatberg measuring 250 metres long and weighing over 130 tons was found in London's sewers and is to be put on display in the Museum of London next year.

In 2015, Severn Trent found a sewer in the Midlands that was completely blocked by fat.

Sarah-Jayne O'Kane, from Severn Trent, said: "We actually had one not that long ago which was 120 metres long.

"We are unblocking more than 50,000 blockages a year and about two thirds of those are caused by people disposing of the wrong things."

She said fatbergs can be dug out if they become solid, but without action sewage can back up into streets and even back up into the toilet pan.

Win £100 – give name to scheme

WORK will start in the new year on a new development in Lichfield – and citizens are being asked to suggest a name to win £100.

Retirement complex specialists McCarthy and Stone say construction will soon start at Cross Keys, transforming into a collection of one and two bedroom Retirement Living apartments for people aged 60.

The housebuilder is appealing for people to enter its 'What's In A Name' competition.

The winning entrant will pick up a cheque for £100 and have the chance to attend the official opening of the development.

Send your name, contact details and suggested name and reason, with the subject header 'Lichfield', to mccarthyandstone@mccann.com before January 31.

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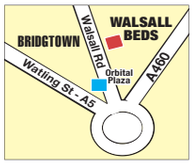

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Safety drive for festive party-goers

REVELLERS planning festive celebrations are being reminded to nominate a designated driver to make sure they get home safely.

Over Christmas and New Year, thousands of people will be out at work nights out and parties and the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership is reminding people to make sure they have a designated driver.

Speaking on behalf of the partnership, Helen Fisher, cabinet member for highways and transport at on Staffordshire County Council said: "It's that time of year again when lots of people take to the towns for their work nights out and family parties.

"Designated drivers do a great job in helping get friends and family home safely after a night out, so make sure you have yours."

Singapore investor in Busy Bees stake

A SINGAPORE investment company has taken a stake in a Staffordshire-based childcare group as it expands in Asia.

Busy Bees, based in Burntwood, has worked in Singapore for two years after buying 70 nurseries both there and in Malaysia.

It also has a business in China. Now Singapore finance group Temasek has taken a 'strategic minority stake' in the business.

The value of the deal is not being revealed, but the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan remains the majority shareholder of Busy Bees, which has grown into a £250m a year operation providing care for 50,000 children across nearly 500 nurseries in the UK, the Far East and Canada. The Temasek deal will support further growth for Busy Bees across Asia and worldwide.

Founders John Woodward, Marg Randles

Marg Randles, co-founder with John Woodward and the group's chief academic officer, said: "Our aim when we started the company, over 33 years ago, was to provide high quality care, and exceptional learning opportunities to each and every child in our care. This is something, that even as we've expanded has remained our main priority.

"Temasek's international expertise and insight will help us to accelerate our global growth and we're excited that this will enable Busy Bees to provide even more children access to high quality childcare."

Busy Bees chief executive Simon Irons said: "The addition of Temasek as a strategic partner allows Busy Bees to continue its path of expansion."

Temasek is a state-owned holding company that is considered as a national wealth fund owned by the Government of Singapore. It owns and manages a net portfolio worth £158bn.

Reel shame as cinema shuts

A passer-by peers into the closed cinema

THE historic Stafford Cinema has shut its doors but questions remain over the future of the site.

The lights are off, the doors closed and 'now showing' signs have blank posters above them.

Staff at the three-screen cinema on Newport Road – which dates back to the 1930s – have been clearing out. But the company that runs it, Curzon, have remained tight-lipped about whether the closure would be temporary or permanent.

Four cinema operators had expressed interest in taking it over.

Stafford Borough Councillor Christine Baron, who represents Forebridge ward, said: "It is such a shame."

The venue was put up for sale in January 2016, around the same time as a new cinema at Riverside was given the green light by the council. The 400-cinema is taking shape just around the corner and is expected to open next year.

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AS told by local Slimming World members who all attend any of the groups shown below.

Michelle Kings says: "When my daughter asked me to join her for support at Slimming World in October 2016 I naturally wanted to help her, but never dreamt I would even lose a stone never mind the 7 stone I have to date!

"The Slimming World plan is so easy to follow, and I have made some lovely friends in our group. What I have lost in weight I have gained in confidence. I would certainly recommend joining Slimming World and staying to group each week because the support we give each other is wonderful.

Gemma Lockley and Wendi Dean are both pregnant and coincidentally attend the same group but different sessions and have the same due date in January.

Focused

Gemma says: "After losing four stone the support I get from the group every week is amazing. Knowing that Slimming World (with the approval of my midwife) is keeping the baby and I as healthy as possible is invaluable".

Wendi added: "Having lost 14 stone Slimming World has helped me to remain fully focused on the need to stay healthy throughout this pregnancy with fantastic support from my group.

"My previous pregnancies have seen me under the care of a specialist consultant because of my weight but now I'm just the same as everyone else, under normal ante natal care".

Member Kay Cox says she has found a 'new life'. "After struggling with my weight for many years I came to a point in my life when I found it was time that something was done about it, so I joined a Cannock Slimming World group where I met a lovely consultant. I never thought that this lady and her group could change me into the person that I am today by helping me week after week. My life has changed completely thanks to Slimming World as I never thought I would reach my target, but with their help they made it achievable for me to do so".

Before and after – Michelle Kings has made some lovely friends in her group

Before and after – Member Kay Cox says she has found a 'new life'

Keith was advised by his doctor to lose weight for his health's sake and although a bit self conscious at joining a Slimming World group he is very glad he did. Still on his journey but after joining at the end of October 2016 he is already 1st 8lb lighter and has already lost 10 per cent of his original body weight. Keith has totally embraced Food Optimising and tries out lots of Slimming World recipes.

Hannah also joined in that October and here is her reply to a text from her consultant, congratulating her on becoming the group's Slimmer of the Week

'Thank you so much for your support. I love Slimming World. I am totally focused and enjoying the cooking. Hubby has done well and has lost weight as well. Got a fab outfit for tonight and I feel fab as well. Thank you for all your support'.

Lynne and Paul Guest are a husband and wife duo who both joined Slimming World in December 16. Lynne dragged a reluctant Paul along to group with him insisting that the only way to lose weight is to stop eating anything but salad and fruit!

By May 2017 Paul had won group title of 'Man of the Year' and reached his target by losing three stone. Lynne reached hers a month later by also losing three stone.

Both still come to the group every week and the once-cynical Paul is an avid cook of Slimming World recipes he finds in the Slimming World magazine and the online members app.

Group members feel encouraged and inspired by both of them and their determination to never put the weight back on.

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Hannah won slimmer of the week

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Rugeley
Rugeley Rose Theatre
Taylors Lane, Rugeley
5.30pm & 7.30pm
Ring Rachel: 07807 785600

Cannock
St Mary's Club & Community Centre
2 Hallcourt Lane (off Walsall Road or Hunter Street), Cannock, WS11 0HE
5.30pm & 7.30pm
Ring Gill: 07958 000554

Penkridge
Haling Dene Centre, Penkridge
5.30pm & 7.30pm
Ring Claire: 07540 230230

TUESDAY

Cannock
Avon Business & Leisure Centre, Jack Holsten Suite, Avon Road, Cannock
(next to Asda)
9am & 11am
Morning Group
Ring Rose: 07837088159

Huntington
Create Church Community Hub, Huntington, WS12 4PD
(behind the Co-op)
5.30pm & 7.30pm
Ring Rose: 07837 088159

Penkridge
Peace Memorial Hall, Pinfold Lane, Penkridge
7.30pm
Ring Claire: 07540 230320

Hednesford
St Josephs Primary School
Hilltop, Hednesford
5.30pm & 7.30pm
Ring Lindsey: 07989 962061

WEDNESDAY

Cannock
St Mary's Club & Community Centre, 2 Hallcourt Lane (off Walsall Road or Hunter Street), Cannock, WS11 0HE
5.30pm
Ring Gill: 07958 000554

Hednesford
Pye Green Community Centre
Bradbury Lane, Pye Green
9.00am & 11.00am
Morning Groups
Ring Rose: 07837 088159

Chadsmoor
Bethany Baptist Church, Cannock Road, Chadsmoor
7.30pm
Ring Lesley-Anne: 07966 456412

THURSDAY

Cannock
Avon Business & Leisure Centre
The Chase Suite Avon Road, Cannock (next to Asda)
5pm & 7pm
Ring Jan:
07939 001558

Hednesford
Aquarius Ballroom, Victoria Street, Hednesford, Cannock
3.30 & 5.30pm & 7.30pm
Ring Gill:
07958 000554

Rugeley
Mansfield House (next to Aldi), Market Street, Rugeley
9.30am & 11.30am
Morning Groups
Ring Rachel:
07807 785600

FRIDAY

Hednesford
Aquarius Ballroom
Victoria Street, Hednesford
9.30am *Morning Group*
Ring Gill:
07958 000554

SATURDAY

Pye Green
Pye Green,
Community Centre
Bradbury Lane, Pye Green
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Ring Fina:
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And the company is confident it will find you a perfect fireplace to match your home!

And apart from all the above Norton Canes Fireplace Factory is now offering one of its best offers EVER. Throughout January it is offering £100 off ANY fireplace and fire when they are purchased together and is also throwing in FREE spotlights into any marble or wood fireplace (worth £99).

So many different designs on show to choose from

Sales manager Phil said:"We have been working hard throughout December to have the showroom looking the best it's ever looked.

"So we wanted to give away a top saving to all our customers".

As well as this great offer it is are also selling off some of its ex-display showroom models so there will be many bargains in store to suit all there customers needs.

Be sure to pop along. Sale starts 10am Tuesday, January 2 or visit www.nortoncanesfireplacefactory.co.uk

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Contest made of write stuff

BUDDING writers have until January 6 to put pen to paper and enter a short story-writing competition.

The Chronicle's sister publication The Express & Star launched the competition last month as part of the Wolverhampton Literature Festival with the winning story to be read out by award-winning local author Paul Dowswell at Wolverhampton Art Gallery on January 28 and then printed in the paper.

Deputy editor Diane Davies said: "The deadline is January 6, so I hope budding writers will get their artistic juices flowing. We want to give the judges plenty of choice."

To submit a piece of fiction, about 1,200 words, email karen.baker@expressandstar.co.uk or post them to Editor's Secretary Karen Baker, Express & Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

Highlights of the January 26-28 festival include Slade drummer Don Powell and Only Fools and Horses star John Challis.

Romance fraud cons prevented in crackdown

CONS worth more than £100,000 have been prevented by vigilant bankers in Staffordshire in two months, police have revealed.

Among the six victims were three people who nearly fell prey to 'romance fraud' – an emerging crime trend where the culprits try to befriend people via dating websites in a ploy to gain their trust and then later request money.

Staffordshire Police stated there was also one incident of carer fraud.

The force said attempts were scuppered thanks to the launch of a new partnership between themselves, trading standards and the finance industry, which saw bank staff call police the moment they suspected someone was being defrauded.

In October and November police received five calls from bank staff who were concerned for six people. As a result the force confirmed acts of fraud were prevented.

Det Insp Rob Harvmann, of the fraud and financial investigation unit, said: "Fraud can have a devastating impact on some of the most susceptible people in society and it's by working together with trading standards and the finance industry that we can make a real difference.

Vulnerable

"This joint working is a great example of taking action to protect people from becoming victims.

"These are particularly callous criminals who prey on the vulnerable to extort money from their victims."

The force says online dating is becoming more popular with the over-60s but as a result they are becoming vulnerable to romance fraud.

County councillor Gill Heath said: "Financial fraud and rogue trader activity causes a huge amount of misery and we're keen to play a part in stopping it wherever we can."

Hawkesyard banks on revamp funding

Owner Ruth Wharton with Michele Fynan, of RBS

A WEDDINGS and event venue at Armitage, near Rugeley, is undergoing a further range of refurbishment work.

The Royal Bank of Scotland is providing funding for the work at Hawkesyard Estate.

Already completed has been the refurbishment of The Orangery, a venue within Hawkesyard Hall popular for post ceremonial drinks and events, and the upgrading of the hall's heating system. The next phase of improvements will focus on the Parklands venue, which is scheduled for completion in mid-2018.

Plans are also under way for Hawkesyard to develop the lake view area, designated for its outdoor marquee weddings, which will complement the existing Armitage and Parklands Suites already in use.

Hawkesyard Estate owner Ruth Whorton said: "In order to maintain our position as one of the region's leading wedding venues we know it's crucial the estate meets expectations of our client's and can cater for their every need."

Set for chop

THIRTY trees in a conservation area will be cut down after a council approved the move. They will be removed from a Grade II-listed walled garden at Shugborough Estate under a project to restore the grounds.

Tree festival raises £1k

A CHRISTMAS tree festival at St Mary's Church in Stafford raised £1,000 – its biggest amount yet.

A cheque was handed to the Mayor, Councillor Aidan Godfrey. Half of the money will go to the church and other half split between the mayor's charities – Staffordshire Women's Aid and Community Link Stafford and District.

Cardiology research is demonstrated

CARDIOLOGY research by the trust that runs County Hospital at Stafford has been on show at four major international events.

The research, undertaken by University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust (UHNM) and Keele University has been displayed in four different countries.

Professor Mamas Mamas, UHNM consultant cardiologist and Professor of Cardiology at Keele University, gave a talk in the USA in October and has since presented his group's pioneering research in Berlin, Saudi Arabia and Poland.

Presentations showcased world-class work undertaken by researchers at the UHNM/Keele University Cardiovascular Research Group.

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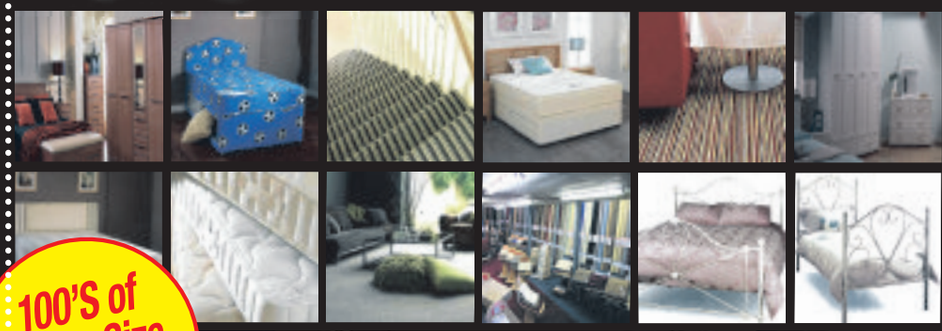

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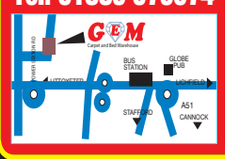

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Uni leads way on two-year degree courses

THE government is endorsing the benefits of accelerated degrees pioneered by Staffordshire University.

Since 2006 Staffordshire University has been at the forefront of delivering two-year accelerated degrees which offer students a quicker route into employment and savings on course fees and living costs.

Universities Minister Jo Johnson highlighted the benefits of accelerated learning and the government launched a consultation on new proposals which would allow universities to raise the cost of two-year degrees.

As one of the original five HEFCE funded Flexible Learning Pathfinders (supported by the Higher Education Academy), Staffordshire University has grown its provision.

Sue Reece, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience at Staffordshire University, said: "Although an increasing number of 18-year-olds apply for our courses, the majority are mature students interested looking for a career change."

Go Wilde as classic takes the stage for new Garrick season

ACTRESSES Gwen Taylor and Susan Penhaligon lead the cast at Lichfield Garrick Theatre's production of The Importance of Being Earnest in the new year.

Taylor, who starred in Barbara and Duty Free, and Upstairs Downstairs star Penhaligon will be joined by Downton Abbey actor Thomas Hewes on the Castle Dyke stage.

The Oscar Wilde classic, revived by the Original Theatre Company, is one of the highlights of the spring season, from January until May.

The drama continues with Blackeyed Theatre's highly-acclaimed production of John Godber's Teechers.

Other star names include BBC Strictly Come Dancing finalist Giovanni Pernice, Brit Award winning vocal trio, Blake and entertainer Bobby Davro. 'The Professor of Pop' Paul Gambaccini discusses his career in the music industry and hosts a music quiz in May, and Crooners bring a fresh twist in homage to the American Songbook and The Rat Pack.

The cast of The Importance of Being Earnest *Picture: Jay Brooks*

Local favourites Quill appear, as well as Jimmy Osmond, BBC Radio 2 jazz presenter Clare Teal and tributes to The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Bob Dylan and Neil Diamond.

For the younger audience there is Milkshake Live!, Horrible Histories: More Best of Barmy Britain and the stage premier of Rod Campbell's Dear Zoo, while the theatre has announced a week of half term family activates and workshops in February.

The Garrick's executive director, Karen Foster said: "I'm delighted to welcome so many wonderful productions back to the theatre."

The 2018 pantomime, Dick Whittington, has also been announced.

The new season brochure will be available at the box office or to be downloaded at www.lichfieldgarrick.com. Tickets can be booked via the box office on 01543 412121 or at www.lichfieldgarrick.com

Commissioner has flexibility over budget

A GOVERNMENT initiative to give Police & Crime Commissioners flexibility to increase their own budget has been welcomed by Staffordshire's incumbent Matthew Ellis.

Policing minister Nick Hurd announced each Commissioner would receive the same amount of core Government grant funding in 2018/19 as in 2017/18, but gave them flexibility to increase by up to £12 annually the Band D council tax people pay locally.

Mr Ellis said: "Commissioners have worked with policing and the Government for seven months to reach this point.

"In Staffordshire, whatever decision I make, the financial challenges are still significant and there will be no let-up in the work we've been doing with police and others to make it more cost effective and better value for money.

"I will require careful and clear proposals from the force as to where any additional funds will be spent and what outcomes for communities would be achieved."

Strictly star in theatre date

Pasha Kovalev

STRICTLY Come Dancing favourite Pasha Kovalev will stop off in Cannock with his new show.

Kovalev, who won the hit BBC show with Caroline Flack in 2014, brings The Magic of Hollywood to the Prince of Wales Centre, in Church Street, on May 27. It will feature special guests, singing and the local dance school community.

Siberian-born Pasha, aged 34, has previously partnered actress Chelsea Healey, Girls Aloud's Kimberley Walsh and Countdown's Rachel Riley on Strictly.

Pasha has toured the UK with the Strictly Come Dancing Arena Tour and in 2012 and 2013 toured the country with his professional dance partner Katya Virshilas.

For tickets see via www.pashakovalev.co.uk or www.facebook.com/PashaKovalevOfficial/

House prices up by £11,000 in 12 months

THE price of the average home in Staffordshire and the Black Country has risen by up to £11,000 in the last year, as demand for property continues to overtake the supply.

Across the UK property prices have risen by 4.7 per cent to an average of £240,860, but this figures is hugely unbalanced by the price of properties in London and the South East.

In the West Midlands, the average is £186,351 and has risen 5.2 per cent in the last year. The latest figures from HM Land Registry show the biggest winners in October were homeowners in Cannock Chase, Sandwell and Walsall with the largest price rises.

In Cannock Chase house prices were up 7.1 per cent to £161,229 in October, a rise of around £11,000. In Stafford, rices rose just by around £6,000 (3.3 per cent) to £192,024. Across Staffordshire prices were up just 3.3 per cent to £183,802, still a rise of £8,000 over prices a year ago.

Average

In Sandwell the average house price was £142,567, up 8.4 per cent or £11,000 on October last year. Walsall prices were up 7.4 per cent to £158,250, while Wolverhampton saw prices up 4.7 per cent to an average of £141,219, up around £6,000. In Dudley prices were up around £7,500 on average to £164,004, a rise of 4.8 per cent.

But the most expensive homes in the area are still in South Staffordshire, where prices rose by 3.9 per cent, or around £8,000 to an average of £218,180 in October.

Figures from the Land Registry show that in October the most expensive area to live in Kensington & Chelsea, where the cost of an average home was £1.2 million.

Children's author books in with pupils

Michael Rosen speaks with Cannock pupils during his visit

SCHOOL pupils across Cannock saw a classic children's tale come to life as an author paid a visit to the town.

Lyncroft House Preparatory School welcomed the former Children's Laureate and author of more than 140 books Michael Rosen to judge a regional poetry competition for local Year 5 and 6 pupils.

Entrants included those from Lyncroft – affiliate of Chase Grammar School – as well as Gorsemoor Primary, Penkridge Middle School, Highfields Primary, Five Ways Primary and Castle House Preparatory School.

The author of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' gave a masterclass on poetry writing to teachers before finishing the day with a retelling of the classic tale. He said: "I thought the poems were absolutely wonderful. The winner was especially amazing, it was genuinely surreal and fantastic."

Lyncroft House headteacher Ian Sterling said: "Michael is a master of storytelling and he completely captivated and inspired the children."

Service the tops

WEST Midlands Ambulance Service has been named the best in the country.

The organisation was crowned Ambulance Service of the Year at the Health Business Awards.

The ceremony was held at the Grange Hotel, London.

Plans sent to council

PLANS received by Lichfield District Council include:

Holly Cottage, Batesway, Upper Longdon – two-storey side extension to form utility, WC and bathroom.

18 North Street, Burntwood – erection of two-bedroom dwelling and single-storey extension to rear of 18 North Street to form lounge.

Deadline looms on school applications

TIME is running out for parents to get their primary school applications in. The deadline to apply is January 15.

Last year, the county council offered nine out of 10 parents the first choice primary school for their children, despite rises in pupil numbers putting pressure on places. A total of 98 per cent were allocated one of their top three preferred schools. However, nearly 1300 parents failed to apply by the deadline.

Parents who have not yet applied for primary school places are being urged to get their applications in over the Christmas break.

For more information, visit www.staffordshire.gov.uk/admissions.

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Know your rights plea to new year shoppers

NEW year bargain hunters are being urged to get to know their rights to avoid being scammed.

Consumer laws were updated in 2015 and aim to give people greater clarity when they shop in store or online.

The Consumer Rights Act includes legislation to allow people to obtain a full refund on faulty goods within 30 days of purchase, an ability to challenge unfair terms and conditions or those that are hidden in small print, and an ability to demand poor services are redone or there is a price reduction.

Victims

The laws also cover faulty digital goods such as online films, games, music and e-books. In addition, people can take steps to reduce the chances of falling victims to scams and fraudsters.

Sales of counterfeit clothes and electrical items online have increased in recent years. People should be aware that websites sometimes use a domain name that falsely suggests clarifies consumer law and

By David Banner

they are UK-based. Of particularly concern are goods offered for sale on social media, which are often counterfeit, potentially dangerous and of poor quality.

Staffordshire County Council's communities leader Gill Heath said: "The post-Christmas period will be extremely busy time for retailers with shoppers looking to snap up a bargain.

"We would again like to remind people of their rights and be aware of potential pitfalls when they're shopping in store or online. Consumer laws apply to both so it's a good idea to familiarise yourself with them."

People with concerns should visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk

MP gets tuned in to Chase Radio success

Amanda Milling MP, centre, with Rob and Jane Hughes from Cannock Chase Radio

A COMMUNITY radio station set to go live on FM has won praise from an MP. Amanda Milling congratulated Cannock Chase Radio after it was granted a community licence by Ofcom last month.

"I am absolutely delighted Cannock Chase Radio has secured an FM licence," Ms Milling said. "Their success is testament to their tireless work and dedication to our local community. They already have a really big presence in the community and I am so pleased that this has finally been recognised by Ofcom. The team did not give up and their tenacity has paid off."

Cannock Chase Radio, launched by Rob and Jane Hughes in November 2014, will broadcast on FM in Cannock Chase, Rugeley and the Trent Valley in the new year.

The Cannock Chase Conservative MP added: "This licence means that Cannock Chase Radio will continue to go from strength to strength."

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Link-up bags success for charity's clothing bank

SCI Textiles is sending fewer garments to landfill after teaming up with House of Bread Stafford

A HOMELESS charity has bagged clothing bank success after linking with an industrial dry cleaning firm.

Businessman, Dave Barrett, an IT specialist and managing director of DBLogic of Rugeley, decided to combine the resources of SCI Textiles and Stafford's House of Bread.

Mr Barrett's company provides SCI Textiles, of Rugeley, with a bespoke IT solution, and in his spare time volunteers with House of Bread Stafford, an independent charity set up in 2010 to support the homeless.

He realised that if the two organisations worked together House of Bread would benefit from a sustainable supply of quality clothing while SCI Textiles would be able to reduce the number of items it sends to landfill.

House of Bread director Will Morris said: "Thanks to Dave we've been able to link up with SCI Textiles and with their fantastic support our clothing bank has turned into a tremendously successful initiative." Following an insurance payout to the customer, SCI Textiles typically sends garments, bedlinen and soft furnishings damaged by fire or flood to landfill. With the House of Bread link up, finding an alternative means of garment disposal has enabled SCI to significantly improve its environmental credentials.

Around 95 per cent of clothes and bedding donated by SCI Textiles is put to good use by House of Bread. Volunteers sort the items and pass on whatever the organisation cannot use to other charities or send to rag agencies.

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Commercial feature

GET the new year off to the best possible start with an exciting range of courses starting this January at South Staffordshire College.

Ideal for school leavers who feel they chose the wrong route in September and adults who want to enhance their career prospects or explore something new, the courses give learners the chance to gain recognised qualifications, new skills and an accelerated route into careers, further learning or an apprenticeship.

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40pc of child arrests from ethnic minorities

Building for promotion

New directors Darren Abley, Steve Cassie and Emma Macdonald

HOUSE builder Cameron Homes has strengthened its board with three promotions.

Emma Macdonald steps up to the position of design and planning director at the Chasetown-based firm, which is expanding its operations throughout central England.

With more than 25 years' residential property experience, she has spent the last three with Cameron.

"My primary role now is to retain our reputation as creators of high-quality, desirable developments as we progress towards larger schemes, together with reinforcing our identity in the market," she said. Darren Abley moved to Cameron a year ago and was recently promoted to the role of production director.

Steve Cassie is the third new board member, stepping up after 15 months with the firm. He now becomes technical director.

● Cameron Homes has handed over a cheque for more than £230,000 to Lichfield District Council as its contribution to community initiatives, with almost half being allocated for primary schools. The firm made the payment as part of the planning process for its 48-home development in Hill Ridware.

MORE than four in 10 children arrested in the West Midlands last year were from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, new figures have revealed.

A study has found 41 per cent of child arrests by West Midlands Police in 2016 were from ethnic minorities – despite those children making up just 30 per cent of the region's population.

Research by the Howard League for Penal Reform shows this percentage was the third highest in the country, behind the Metropolitan Police at 60 per cent and the Bedfordshire force at 42 per cent.

West Midlands Police made 5,244 child arrests last year, 2,165 of which were of ethnic minorities.

In Staffordshire, 17 per cent of the 1,350 children arrested were from ethnic minorities.

The statistics have been revealed as part of the Howard League's analysis of findings from the Lammy Review.

Concern

The review, chaired by David Lammy MP, called for a principle of 'explain or reform' to apply to every institution in the criminal justice system.

Frances Crook, chief executive of the Howard League, said: "The disproportionate number of BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic) children being brought into the system is of great concern.

"It raises serious questions about decision-making throughout the criminal justice journey – from the police's decision to arrest, to the remand and sentencing decisions of the youth courts."

The number of child arrests made across England and Wales has dropped to fewer than 88,000 in 2016 from almost 250,000 in 2010.

Ethnic minority children accounted for 26 per cent of these arrests.

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Word to the wise: It's poet Benjamin

When Benjamin Zephaniah received the dates for his first tour in eight years two stood out. The performance poet who stars in Peaky Blinders and became friends with Nelson Mandela was thrilled to note gigs in Birmingham and Shrewsbury.

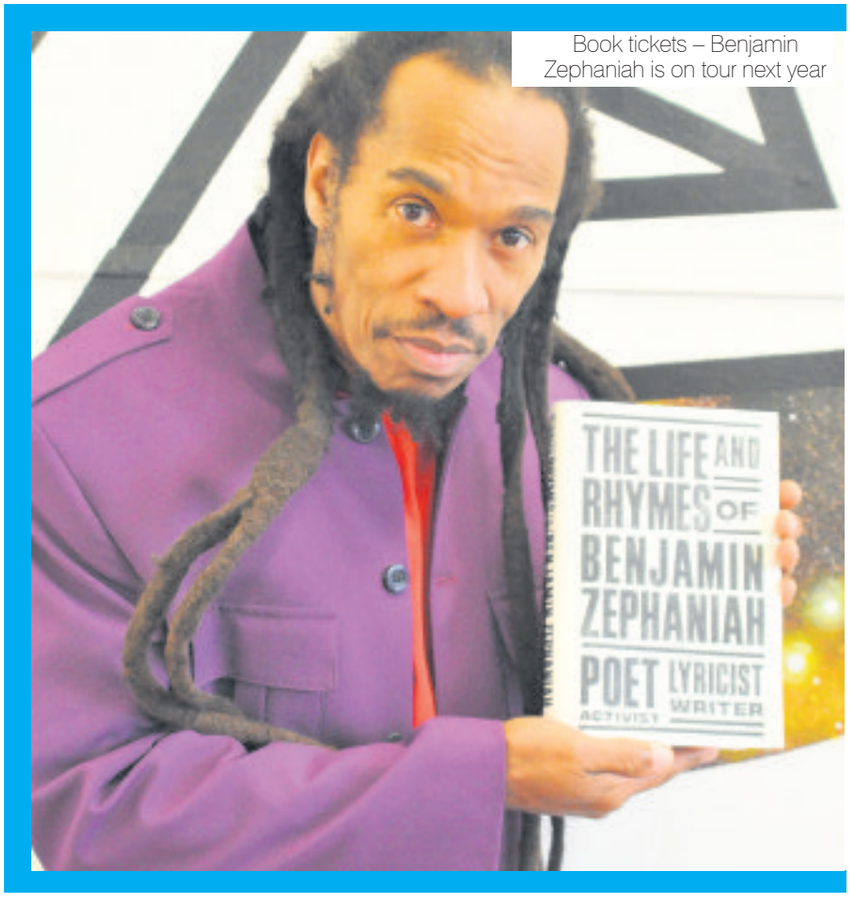
Birmingham was, of course, the city in which he was born and the place that honed both his political views and his determination to make something of his life. And Shrewsbury was a crossroads town – a place near to the north Shropshire borstal that provided him with a crossroads moment. It led to him reshaping his life and becoming one of Britain's best loved and most respected poets.

Benjamin or, to give him his rather grand title, Professor Benjamin Zephaniah, will hit the road in spring, playing Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn on June 14 and Birmingham's Town Hall on June 15. The shows will follow the release of his new autobiography, The Life And Rhymes of Benjamin Zephaniah, which will be published by Simon & Schuster in May.

He is looking forward to being back on the road and to see friendly faces from the West Midlands.

"Those places will always be important to me," he says. "I live in a different part of the country now but I'm regularly back in Birmingham. Peaky Blinders is centred on the city and my mother still lives there too.

"And Shrewsbury brings back very fond memories. I've played Theatre Severn before and always been given a very warm welcome. I'm looking forward to coming back."



Book tickets – Benjamin Zephaniah is on tour next year

INDIVIDUAL

Benjamin's new book and tour chart our social history, as well as his own individual story.

He loved growing up in Handsworth, which he called the Jamaican capital of Europe. He learnt to rhyme at his mother's church but although his work become popular within the African-Caribbean and Asian community he thought the town was too small.

He was not satisfied preaching about the sufferings of black people to black people, so he sought a wider mainstream audience. At the age of 22 he headed to London where his first book Pen Rhythm was published by Page One Books. The book sold well, going into three editions but it was in performance that the Dub (Reggae) Poet would cause a revolution, a revolution that injected new life into the British poetry scene and attracted the interest of many mainstream publishers, many of whom had sent refusal letters to him only 12 months earlier. In the early 1980s when punks and Rastas were on the streets protesting about unemployment, homelessness and the National Front, Benjamin's poetry could be heard at demonstrations, outside police stations and on the dance floor.

His mission was to take poetry everywhere, and to popularise it by reaching people who didn't read books. His poetry was political, musical, radical and relevant. By the early 1990s, Benjamin had performed on every continent in the world, a feat he achieved in only one year, and he hasn't stopped performing and touring since. Nelson Mandela, after hearing Benjamin's tribute to him while he was in prison, requested an introduction to the poet that grew into a lifelong relationship, inspiring Benjamin's work with children in South Africa.

CELEBRATION

Benjamin would also go on to be the first artist to record with The Wailers after the death of Bob Marley in a musical tribute to Nelson Mandela. His story is a celebration of a truly extraordinary life story which remarks upon the power of poetry and the importance of pushing boundaries with the arts.

Remarkably, the genesis of Benjamin's new book can be traced directly back to the last time he played in Shrewsbury. There, he met a writer friend who encouraged him to start mapping out the details of his life. The process took more years than Benjamin imagined, but he's delighted to have completed his autobiography and is looking forward to sharing his stories at local theatres.

He says: "The work is an autobiography and a social history. They say you mellow with age, but, if anything, I'm angrier than I've ever been. There is still injustice, there is still hate, there is still intolerance. The Life and Rhymes is about the race riots, the struggle to free Mandela, my career as writer and poet, and much more. It charts my course through a changing political and cultural landscape. I'd always been asked by a literary agent to write an autobiography but I guess I was too busy and just didn't have time. Then, in recent years, the time felt right. A lot has happened in my life but a lot has happened in the country too."

● **For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.**

Humdrum life? No way! I enjoy it

Ian has a blast as The Humdrum Express

Lacking excitement or variety; boringly monotonous' – it's not the usual way to describe yourself. Humdrum is also probably the last thing you'd want people to call your work, but Ian Passey doesn't care.

Known for his fast-paced lyrical style, Ian – better known as The Humdrum Express – is a man on a mission.

"I chose the name because my initial plan was to write mini kitchen sink dramas set to music," he says. "It can also be perceived as a boring newspaper [not the Star, we hope] or a commuter train, which fitted in nicely with my idea of writing about having to go to work every day."

Born in Quinton, he's spent most of his later life around the Wyre Forest. First of all in Bewdley, he now resides in Kidderminster.

"I'm currently a screen printer by day which allows me plenty of thinking time to come up with song ideas.

"I played in a few bands initially. Smedley, Jackpot and Swagger all gigged regularly across the Midlands during the 90s. After taking a break, I rediscovered a love for songwriting which eventually led to becoming The Humdrum Express. Ten years and five albums later, I'm enjoying it more than ever."

FRUSTRATION

He counts the likes of John Cooper Clarke, Ian Dury and the Blockheads, Half Man Half Biscuit and Sleaford Mods amongst his influences. So it is little surprise satire and political swipes form a part of his repertoire.

"I don't really consider myself to be a political artist," says a man who describes his age as 'old enough to know better'. "Even the term 'social observer' sits uncomfortably but I suppose I set myself up for it. Reviews tend to mention the words 'acerbic' or 'sardonic' which always raises a smile. I like to mix humour with familiar cultural references, or create fictional characters eager to share their bitter-sweet tales of delusion."

So like those listed above, can we assume that Ian views the world with an air of frustration? "I suppose so. It was never a plan to write in this way but it's something that has evolved over time. It's also an outlet that gives me opportunities to meet others with a similar feeling of exasperation. There's a sense of making the most of difficult circumstances."

Ian is a keen member of his community and likes to take a look at the issues which affect his corner of Worcestershire, too. This stretches into his work in more ways than one. Take the video for his latest single, E-Petition. He used Stourbridge as the filming location. But anybody who might have been popping into town that day would have been in for a bit of a shock.

"The video for E-Petition was filmed on a Sunday afternoon. We had a cast of 60 people dressed as zombies rampaging through the High Street which was such fun to film.

"I really enjoy getting others involved and I'm always humbled by how many are willing to go along with the ideas with such enthusiasm." And as for the single itself, he added: "It's had prime time BBC 6 Music airplay and has been very well received."

RESPECT

The E-Petition video also saw him rekindle a bromance with local musician, critic, actor and filmmaker Nick Townsend, who many may know as the frontman of Kidderminster band Weak13.

"It's great to see Weak13 doing well at the moment and he seems to be gaining huge respect for his filmmaking too. I can't think of anyone who works harder for fellow bands with his reviews, advice and, of course, his fantastic videos. We'll definitely team up again.

"I recently put a band together for a show at The Rose Theatre in Kidderminster featuring members of a couple of my favourite acts, Flying Ant Day and Sleuth. When schedules allow, we're planning four or five dates next year as a full band which I'm looking forward to immensely. I love playing my solo gigs but to have the option of doing something different with the songs is both fresh and inspiring.

"It's been a very busy year and I'm finally able to enjoy spending a bit of time writing again," he admits, amongst his promotion duties for E-Petition.

"I've got a couple of gigs with two of my lyrical heroes early in the new year, with Attila the Stockbroker in Stourbridge and Half Man Half Biscuit at The Robin 2. I've been lucky enough to play with them both before and they're ones I always look forward to both as a performer and a fan. I'm not sure whether a new album is immediately on the cards."

LEIGH SANDERS

SATURDAY'S TV DECEMBER 30

CHOICE

Alan Carr

The Price Is Right (Channel 4, 8pm)

It's been called the world's longest-running game show – it first appeared on US TV in 1956 – but The Price is Right hasn't been on UK TV screens in a decade. However, that's all about to change as Alan Carr brings the format back for this one-off special, which, if successful, could lead to a new series. The presenter is following in the footsteps of Leslie Crowther, Bruce Forsyth and Joe Pasquale as he invites a group of lucky contestants to ëcome on down!' and guess the price of a selection of weird and wonderful prizes. If they're lucky, they'll also get to spin the big wheel and go through to the showcase showdown. Carr will also be presiding over such classic Price is Right games as Time Flies, Plinko and Cliffhanger.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen. **11.30** Nigel Slater's New Year Suppers. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15 Film:** 102 Dalmatians. (2000) **2.50 Film:** Penguins of Madagascar. (2014) **4.10** Final Score. **5.30** BBC News. **5.40** Regional Programme. **5.50** Celebrity Mastermind.

6.20 Pointless Celebrities. Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present a Radio 2-themed edition of the unorthodox quiz, featuring Jo Whiley, Jeremy Vine, Zoe Ball, Michael Ball, Ken Bruce, Vanessa Feltz and Craig Charles. (R)

7.10 A Christmas Carol Goes Wrong. The Olivier Award-winning Mischief Theatre Company returns to the small screen with another festive spoof. After mauling JM Barrie's classic Peter Pan last year, disaster-prone am-dram troupe the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society has been blacklisted by the BBC. Determined not to accept the ban without a fight, the group resolves to force itself back onto the screen by hijacking the jewel in the corporation's Christmas crown – a live production of A Christmas Carol, staged by an infinitely more esteemed cast. What follows is an anarchic hour of TV in which the performers quickly find themselves out of their depth, with no idea how to direct a live studio, or handle the special effects necessary to bring Dickens' perennial festive favourite to life. Plus, there's the small matter of the real cast, who are less than impressed at having their screen-time stolen by a band of inept replacements.

8.00 Film: Avengers: Age of Ultron. (2015) Premiere. The superhero team faces a threat from within when Iron Man creates an artificial intelligence to take their place protecting the world. The android grows resentful of his creators, and decides his mission is best accomplished by wiping out the human race. Meanwhile, a pair of vengeful superpowered twins seeks to turn the Avengers against each other. Sci-fi adventure sequel, starring Robert Downey Jr.

10.10 BBC News; Weather.; National Lottery Update.

10.30 Match of the Day.

11.55 The NFL Show.

12.25 Film: Dinner for Schmucks. (2010) **2.15** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.20** BBC News.

BBC2

6.35 Birds of Paradise: The Ultimate Quest. (R) **7.35 Film:** Tinker Bell and the Pirate Fairy. (2014) **8.45** The Big Family Cooking Showdown. (R) **9.45** Snow Leopard – Beyond the Myth: Natural World. (R) **10.35** Jane Austen: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **11.35 Film:** Mansfield Park. (1999) **1.20** The World's Most Extraordinary Homes. (R) **2.20** Six Robots & Us. (R) **3.20 Film:** All About Eve. (1950) Drama, starring Bette Davis. **5.35** Talking Pictures: Barry Norman.

6.20 Film: Alice in Wonderland. (2010) A 19-year-old Alice returns to the magical land, having forgotten her previous adventures. She finds the tyrannical Red Queen has begun a reign of terror that can only be ended by slaying the monstrous Jabberwocky – a task she is seemingly destined to attempt. Tim Burton's fantasy adventure based on Lewis Carroll's novels, starring Mia Wasikowska, Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter and Anne Hathaway.

8.00 Dad's Army. Mainwaring orders his blundering platoon to guard the bank's money until repairs on the bomb-damaged vault are completed. Comedy, starring Arthur Lowe and John Le Mesurier. (R)

8.30 Grand Tours of Scotland's Lochs. New series. Paul Murton begins an exploration of the nation's lochs by travelling through the wilds surrounding Loch Etive, taking in the Falls of Lora and Rannoch Moor.

9.00 Feud: Bette and Joan. As the 35th Academy Awards approach, Joan enlists the aid of Hedda to help thwart Bette's chances of claiming a record-breaking third Oscar for her role in Baby Jane.

9.45 Feud: Bette and Joan. Warner pressures Aldrich to reunite his original Baby Jane team for a follow-up "hag horror" picture. Meanwhile, a face from Joan's past poses a threat.

10.30 Film: Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte. (1964) A reclusive Southern belle trying to save her family home is driven to the brink of madness by memories of her traumatic past. Thriller, with Bette Davis and Olivia De Havilland.

12.40 Absolutely Fashion: Inside British Vogue. (R) **1.40** Sign Zone: Mary, Mel & Sue's Big Christmas Thank You. (R) **2.40** Rick Stein's Road to Mexico. (R) **3.40** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.20** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.30** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.45** Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.00** Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.15** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.30** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **8.55** Scrambled!'s Shiniest Showdown Ever. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Saturday Morning with James Martin at Christmas. **11.25** Endeavour. (R) **1.15** ITV News; Weather. **1.30** The Chase. (R) **2.30 Film:** Three Men and a Baby. (1987) Comedy, starring Tom Selleck, Ted Danson and Steve Guttenberg. **4.25 Film:** Despicable Me 2. (2013) Animated comedy sequel, with the voice of Steve Carell.

6.10 Regional Programme; Weather.

6.20 ITV News; Weather.

6.30 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway Presents – Who Shot Simon Cowell? The complete series of sketches from the 2016 run of the entertainment show.

7.00 Guess the Star. Jonathan Ross hosts a special one-off game show in which three teams of celebrities are challenged to guess the true identity of various famous faces, who have been transformed into their musical heroes for a special performance. Team Diversity, made up of Jordan Banjo, Perri Kiely and Sam Craske take on Anthony Cotton, Catherine Tyldesley and Sally Dynevor of Team Coronation Street, and Team Daytime, represented by Eamonn Holmes, Stacey Solomon and Judge Rinder.

8.00 Film: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1. (2010) The dark lord Voldemort rises to ultimate power over the magical world, so the teenage wizard and his friends set out on a mission to find the magical horcruxes – artefacts containing parts of the evil wizard's soul that hold the key to destroying him. The first half of the two-part conclusion to the fantasy saga, starring Daniel Radcliffe, Ralph Fiennes, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint.

10.40 ITV News; Weather.

11.00 Film: The Mask. (1994) Comic-book comedy, starring Jim Carrey and Cameron Diaz.

12.50 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

7.05 Film: Bridge to Terabithia. (2007) Fantasy drama, starring Josh Hutcherson. **8.50** Lego Masters. (R) **9.55** The Simpsons. (R) **10.25** The Simpsons. (R) **10.50** The Simpsons. (R) **11.20** The Simpsons. (R) **11.50** We're Going on a Bear Hunt. (R) **12.20** Born Silly. (R) **12.50 Film:** Ever After: A Cinderella Story. (1998) Romantic drama, starring Drew Barrymore and Dougray Scott. **3.15 Film:** Pride & Prejudice. (2005) Period drama, starring Keira Knightley. **5.40** Channel 4 News. **5.55 Film:** Crocodile Dundee II. (1988) The rugged Australian adventurer sets out to save his reporter girlfriend from New York drug dealers. Having rescued her from their clutches, he realises they will soon be coming after him – so he decides to even the odds by luring them to the Outback for a final showdown. Comedy adventure sequel, starring Paul Hogan, Linda Kozlowski, John Meillon and Charles S Dutton.

8.00 The Price Is Right. Alan Carr invites five lucky members of the studio audience to 'Come on Down' for a special edition of the world's longest-running TV game show.

9.00 Film: The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1. (2014) Katniss Everdeen is brought to a secretive underground society following the destruction of the televised deathmatch. She becomes the figurehead of a revolution against the despotic Panem regime, while her friend Peeta remains a captive of its tyrannical president. Part one of the two-part conclusion to the sci-fi adventure series, starring Jennifer Lawrence, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Julianne Moore and Donald Sutherland.

11.20 Film: Speed. (1994) An LAPD cop discovers a psychotic criminal has planted a bomb on a crowded bus, primed to go off if the vehicle drops below 50mph. He boards the vehicle and helps a hapless passenger who has been forced to take the wheel and keep a constant speed to avoid a disaster. Action thriller, starring Keanu Reeves, Sandra Bullock, Dennis Hopper and Jeff Daniels.

1.25 Speed with Guy Martin. (R) **2.20** Hollyoaks. Omnibus. Brody finds out that Maggie has cancer. **4.05** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **5.00** Four in a Bed. (R) **5.25** Kirstie's Handmade Christmas. (R) **5.45 Film:** The Four Musketeers. (1974)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.15** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.50 Film:** The African Queen. (1951) **12.55 Film:** Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes. (1984) Drama, starring Christopher Lambert. **3.30** Live Aviva Premiership Rugby Union. Harlequins v Northampton Saints (Kick-off 4.00pm).

6.05 World's Strongest Man 2017. Action from the fourth heat in Botswana, which featured Britain's Eddie Hall – a four-time winner of Britain's Strongest Man who finished third in the 2016 competition.

7.00 Blind Date. Paul O'Grady returns as host for another series of the revived dating show. As ever, three singletons are challenged to prove their worth as romance prospects to a potential suitor by their personality alone. In this opening edition, the singles bring their dogs along in the hopes of scoring some "puppy love", and self-described diva Devorshka must choose between a plumber, a banker and an accountant.

8.00 Greatest Celebrity Wind-Ups Ever! New series. Joe Pasquale narrates a special documentary celebrating some of the greatest pranks celebrities have managed to play on each other. Highlights include Ant and Dec setting up Simon Cowell in a classic Saturday Night Takeaway moment he would probably rather forget, and Eurovision winner Cheryl Baker falling victim to one of Noel Edmonds' "Gotcha" tricks. Ben Hanlin talks viewers through an elaborate hoax he pullled on former King of the Jungle Joe Swash, and more practical jokes come courtesy of Freddie Flintoff, Little Mix, and Game of Thrones' pint-sized trickster Maisie Williams.

9.00 5 News Weekend.

9.05 Football on 5: The Championship. Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games in the Championship, including Middlesbrough v Aston Villa at the Riverside Stadium, Birmingham City v Leeds United at St Andrew's.

10.15 Football on 5: Goal Rush.

10.45 How Magic Changed TV. The story of magic on television. (R)

12.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** Our Dream Hotel. **4.45** House Doctor. (R) **5.10** Wildlife SOS. (R) **5.35** Chinese Food in Minutes. (R) **5.50** Access. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Tutankhamun: The Truth Uncovered **7.30** Planet Earth II: A World of Wonder **9.00** Spiral **11.05** 2017: A Year in the Life of a Year **11.35** Glen Campbell: The Rhinestone Cowboy **12.35** Chuck Berry in Concert **1.35** Tutankhamun: The Truth Uncovered **2.35** Planet Earth II: A World of Wonder **3.35** Close

ITV2

2.20 Mr Bean **3.20 Film:** Bean (1997) **4.25** FYI Daily **4.30 Film:** Bean (1997) **5.10 Film:** Ella Enchanted (2004) **6.15** FYI Daily **6.20 Film:** Ella Enchanted (2004) **7.00 Film:** Legally Blonde (2001) **8.00** FYI Daily **8.05 Film:** Legally Blonde (2001) **9.00 Film:** Bridesmaids (2011) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05 Film:** Bridesmaids (2011) **11.35** Family Guy **12.30** American Dad! **1.25** Celebrity Juice: Bestest of the Unseenest Bits **2.25** Celebrity Juice: The Special Special **3.15** Through the Keyhole **4.10** Educating Joey Essex: Football Fever

ITV3

1.10 The Making of The Sound of Music Live **1.40 Film:** Bugsy Malone (1976) **2.40** FYI Daily **2.45 Film:** Bugsy Malone (1976) **3.45 Film:** The Wizard of Oz (1939) **4.45** FYI Daily **4.50 Film:** The Wizard of Oz (1939) **5.50** Prince Harry and Meghan: Truly, Madly, Deeply **6.55** Kate: The Making of a Modern Queen **7.55** Diana: A Life After Death **9.00** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis **1.00** Housewife, 49 **2.55** Agatha Christie's Marple **4.35** Wycliffe

ITV4

11.20 Ironside **1.30** ITV Racing: Live from Newbury. **4.00 Film:** 633 Squadron (1964) **5.05** FYI Daily **5.10 Film:** 633 Squadron (1964) **5.55 Film:** Aces High (1976) **7.00** FYI Daily **7.05 Film:** Aces High (1976) **8.15 Film:** Jackie Chan's First Strike (1996) **9.15** FYI Daily **9.20 Film:** Jackie Chan's First Strike (1996) **10.00 Film:** Swordfish (2001) **11.00** FYI Daily **11.05 Film:** Swordfish (2001) **12.05 Film:** The Dirty Dozen (1967) **1.05** FYI Daily **1.10 Film:** The Dirty Dozen (1967) **3.05** The Classic Car Show **3.55** Goodwood Festival of Speed **4.45** Goodwood Revival **5.30** Tommy Cooper

E4

11.15 Film: Dr Dolittle (1998) **1.00** Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas **1.30 Film:** Toy Story OF TERROR! (2013) **2.00 Film:** Toy Story That Time Forgot (2014) **2.30** Toy Story Toons **3.00** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: U Is for Underpants **3.30** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: V Is for Valentino the Rabbit **4.00** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: W Is for Weddings

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NEW YEAR'S EVE

CHOICE

Jools Holland

Jools' Annual Hootenanny (BBC2, 11.20pm)
Jools Holland presents his 25th annual New Year party, headlined this year by Ed Sheeran, who performs tracks from his recent album Divide with the Rhythm & Blues Orchestra, as well as a cover of a classic British rock song. Other acts taking to the stage tonight include Mavis Staples, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Jessie Ware, Soul II Soul, Beth Ditto, the Beat starring Dave Wakelin, George McCrae, Jose Feliciano and Ruby Turner, while the Pipes & Drums of the 1st Battalion Scots Guards will be on hand at midnight to play in the new year.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **8.00** Match of the Day. (R) **9.25 Film:** Bolt. (2008) **10.55 Film:** The Croods. (2013) **12.25** BBC News; Weather. **12.40** Comic Relief 2017: 'Twas the Thanks After Red Nose Day. (R) **1.40 Film:** Bedknobs and Broomsticks. (1971) **3.35** Songs of Praise: The Big Sing. **4.05** Top of the Pops New Year Special. **5.05** Attenborough and the Giant Elephant. (R)

6.05 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Celebrity Mastermind. Sky News political editor Faisal Islam, comedian Lloyd Langford, Made in Chelsea's Ollie Locke and Saturday Mash-Up presenter Yasmin Evans put their knowledge to the test.

7.00 Countryfile. Adam Henson takes a trip to New Zealand, where he helps with a cattle muster, goes on the hunt for a rare breed of goat, and witnesses large-scale sheep farming.

8.00 Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce presents a special episode from the set of EastEnders celebrating the history of film, theatre, music and television, in which iconic props are brought in to be valued.

9.00 The Real Marigold on Tour. Rosemary Shrager, Sheila Ferguson, Paul Nicholas and Dennis Taylor explore Thailand, where they try their hands at tai chi and take part in a Ladyboys show. Last in the series.

10.00 BBC News; Weather.

10.20 The Graham Norton Show. Graham is joined by the stars of The Greatest Showman, Hugh Jackman, Zendaya and Zac Efron, as well as Gary Oldman and Suranne Jones. With music by the Leading Ladies.

11.20 Nile Rodgers & Chic: Good Times 2017. The musician and his funk band perform live as the year draws to a close. Featuring footage of the traditional New Year's fireworks display, choreographed to fit a medley of music.

11.55 New Year's Eve Fireworks 2017. The annual celebratory New Year's Eve fireworks display, live from the Thames Embankment in London.

12.10 Nile Rodgers & Chic: Good Times 2018. **12.50** Michael McIntyre: Happy & Glorious. (R) **1.50 Film:** Old School. (2003) **3.20** Weather for the Week Ahead. **3.25** BBC News.

BBC2

6.35 Birds of Paradise: The Ultimate Quest. (R) **7.35 Film:** Mars Needs Moms. (2011) Animated sci-fi adventure, with the voice of Seth Robert Dusky. **9.00** The Big Family Cooking Showdown. (R) **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** The A to Z of TV Cooking. (R) **12.15 Film:** Shall We Dance? (2004) Romantic comedy, starring Richard Gere and Susan Sarandon. **1.55** Six Robots & Us. (R) **2.55** Talking Pictures: Anthony Hopkins. (R) **3.40 Film:** 84 Charing Cross Road. (1987) Romantic drama, starring Anne Bancroft and Anthony Hopkins. **5.15 Film:** Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time. (2010) A prince framed for murdering his adoptive father must stop a magical weapon from falling into the wrong hands. Fantasy adventure, starring Jake Gyllenhaal and Gemma Arterton.

7.00 Robot Wars Special. More motorised mayhem as radio-controlled robots vie for places in the final battle arena.

8.00 Film: Into the Woods. (2014) Premiere. A wicked witch agrees to lift a curse on a young couple if they will help restore her once beautiful looks. Musical fantasy, based on Stephen Sondheim's hit stage show, which entwines the fairy tale stories of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk and Rapunzel. Starring Meryl Streep, James Corden and Emily Blunt, with a cameo by Johnny Depp as the Big Bad Wolf.

10.00 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action, featuring Crystal Palace v Manchester City and West Bromwich Albion v Arsenal.

10.50 Live at the Apollo. Henning Wehn hosts tonight's show, which features performances from Lucy Porter and Guz Khan.

11.20 Jools' Annual Hootenanny. Jools Holland presents his 25th annual New Year party, featuring performances from Ed Sheeran, Mavis Staples, Beth Ditto, Ruby Turner, Jessie Ware and Soul II Soul.

1.20 Best of Glastonbury 2017. Jo Whiley and Mark Radcliffe introduce highlights from the festival at Worthy Farm in Somerset. (R) **3.25** Sign Zone: Countryfile. John Craven, Anita Rani and Matt Baker present a special festive episode. (R) **4.20** This Is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Ultimate Spider-Man Vs The Sinister Six. **7.20** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.30** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.45** Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.00** Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.15** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.30** A Grizzly New Year's Tale: The Crystal Eye. (R) **8.55** Scrambled! Record Breakers. **9.25** Countrywise. (R) **9.50 Film:** Casino Royale. (1967) Spoof James Bond adventure, starring David Niven. **12.25** ITV News; Weather. **12.30** All Star Musicals. (R) **2.20** A Very Royal Wedding. (R) **3.30** A Right Royal Quiz. **4.30** Victoria. (R)

6.25 Regional Programme; Weather.

6.35 ITV News; Weather.

6.50 Cannonball Splash Hits. Andrew Flintoff presents highlights from the first series of the action-packed game show, in which 24 contestants are tasked with traversing a series of water-based challenges and custom-made inflatable obstacles, each designed to test speed, accuracy, height and distance. With contributions from regulars Frankie Bridge, Radzi Chinyanganya, Ryan Hand and Maya Jama.

7.50 Film: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2. (2011) The young wizard continues his search for the artefacts containing fragments of the dark lord Voldemort's soul. Time is running out, as the evil sorcerer is aware of Harry's mission, and marshals his forces for a final, devastating attack on Harry and his friends at Hogwarts school. Conclusion of the fantasy saga, with Daniel Radcliffe, Ralph Fiennes, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson and Alan Rickman.

10.15 The Real Full Monty. Alexander Armstrong and Ashley Banjo lead a group of male celebrities as they recreate the famous striptease from The Full Monty to raise awareness of men's health issues. (R)

11.45 ITV News; Weather; New Year Bongs.

12.10 Film: Parenthood. (1989) Comedy drama, starring Steve Martin. **2.15** Take Me Out. Four more suitors seek the approval of Paddy McGuinness's 30 single women. (R) **3.20** Through the Keyhole. (R) **4.10** ITV Nightscreen. Text-based information service.

CHANNEL 4

7.35 Frasier. (R) **8.00** Frasier. (R) **8.25** F1 2017: Hamilton's Record Breaking Season. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **12.55** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25** The Simpsons. (R) **1.55 Film:** We Bought a Zoo. (2011) Fact-based comedy drama, starring Matt Damon. **4.20** Channel 4 News. **4.25** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **5.25** Britain's Wildest Weather 2017. (R)

7.00 Amazing Spaces Snow and Ice Special. Architect George Clarke and master craftsman Will Hardie find out how Norway, a country with some of the harshest weather on the planet, has become a leader in architectural design. Buildings include a treehouse that can withstand nine tons of snowfall and gale force winds, and an ice hotel complete with 30 rooms, a bar and even a snow chapel. Plus, a moveable home that has kept members of its community safe for hundreds of years. (R)

8.00 The Crystal Maze: Celebrity Christmas Special. Richard Ayoade hosts the game show, inviting the Saturdays and Strictly star Mollie King, gold medal-winning athletes Ellie Simmonds and Nicola Adams, Made in Chelsea's Ollie Locke and Murder In Successville comedian Tom Davis to take his golden hand and tackle a number of physical, skill, mystery and mental challenges. Their aim is to win the elusive crystals – and the more they win, the more time they get in the Crystal Dome, where they will be raising money for Stand Up for Cancer. With appearances from Adam Buxton and Jessica Hynes. (R)

9.00 Alan Carr's New Year Specstacular 2017. The presenter hosts his annual New Year's party, with a mixture of sketches and party games. Alan is joined by guests Big Narstie, Jonnie Peacock, Keith Lemon, Caroline Flack, Alex Brooker, Binky Felstead, Tom Davis, Charlotte Dawson, Kim Woodburn and Liam Charles, with music from Stefflon Don and Pete Tong, with Becky Hill and The Heritage Orchestra, conducted by Jules Buckley.

11.00 Big Fat Quiz of the Year 2017. Jimmy Carr hosts a comedy quiz looking back at the past 12 months. (R)

1.00 Gogglebox 2017. (R) **2.55** The Crystal Maze: Celebrity Special. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.15** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.25** Poppy Cat. (R) **6.35** Wissper. (R) **6.40** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.45** Milkshake! Bopping About. (R) **6.55** Simon. (R) **7.00** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.05** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.15** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.30** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.45** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.55** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.25** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.35** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.25** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.45** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.55** Peppa Pig. (R) **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.35** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.25** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **12.00** Winter in Alaska. (R) **12.55 Film:** Three Men and a Little Lady. (1990) Comedy sequel, starring Tom Selleck. **2.55 Film:** Groundhog Day. (1993) Comedy, starring Bill Murray. **3.55** 5 News Update. **4.00 Film:** Groundhog Day. (1993) Concluded. **4.55** 5 News Weekend. **5.00 Film:** The Lego Movie. (2014) Premiere. Animated comedy.

7.00 The Lego Story: Brick by Brick. Documentary charting the history of the toy, looking at how the seemingly humble bricks have been developed and adapted over the decades into one of the world's most popular brands. (R)

8.00 World's Strongest Man 2017. Action from the fifth heat in Botswana, which featured Lithuania's Zydrunas Savickas, a four-time winner who was returning from an injury that kept him out of the 2016 event.

8.50 5 News Weekend.

9.00 All New When TV Goes Horribly Wrong. Richard Bacon narrates a compilation of disasters befalling TV presenters, featuring mishaps involving Phillip Schofield, Anne Diamond, Denis Tuohy, Ross King, Charlotte Crosby and Stephen Bear, as well as other presenters from around the world. The show looks back at technical problems on the opening night of BBC2 and some unexpected nudity on daytime TV.

11.55 Aviva Premiership Rugby Highlights. Mark Durden-Smith and David Flatman present action from the 12th round of matches, including Bath v Wasps, Gloucester v Sale Sharks and Saracens v Worcester Warriors.

12.50 SuperCasino. **3.10** World's Strongest Man 2017. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Dancing the Nutcracker – Inside the Royal Ballet **8.30** Victoria Wood: Seen on TV **10.00** Detectorists **1.00** Victoria Wood: Seen on TV **2.30** David Attenborough's Zoo Quest in Colour **4.00** Close

ITV2

12.25 You've Been Framed! Top 100 Animals **1.30** Mr Bean **2.30 Film:** Happy Feet Two (2011) **3.30** FYI Daily **3.35 Film:** Happy Feet Two (2011) **4.35 Film:** Nanny McPhee (2005) **5.35** FYI Daily **5.40 Film:** Nanny McPhee (2005) **6.40 Film:** New Year's Eve (2011) **7.40** FYI Daily **7.45 Film:** New Year's Eve (2011) **9.00 Film:** Sherlock Holmes (2009) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05 Film:** Sherlock Holmes (2009) **11.35** Family Guy **2.00** American Dad! **2.55** Celebrity Juice: Bestest Bits 2017

ITV3

11.55 FYI Daily **12.00 Film:** Carry On Doctor (1967) **12.50 Film:** Carry On Again Doctor (1969) **1.55** FYI Daily **2.00 Film:** Carry On Again Doctor (1969) **2.35 Film:** The Likely Lads (1976) **3.35** FYI Daily **3.40 Film:** The Likely Lads (1976) **4.25** Lewis **6.25** Diana, Our Mother: Her Life and Legacy **8.00** Midsomer Murders **10.00** My Boy Jack **12.00** Christmas Epic Fails **1.00** The Knock **3.55** Jane Eyre

ITV4

1.55 Film: Lawman (1971) **2.55** FYI Daily **3.00 Film:** Lawman (1971) **4.00 Film:** The Train Robbers (1973) **5.05** FYI Daily **5.10 Film:** The Train Robbers (1973) **5.50 Film:** Jeremiah Johnson (1972) **6.55** FYI Daily **7.00 Film:** Jeremiah Johnson (1972) **8.05 Film:** Jaws: The Revenge (1987) **9.10** FYI Daily **9.15 Film:** Jaws: The Revenge (1987) **10.00 Film:** Total Recall (1990) **11.00** FYI Daily **11.05 Film:** Total Recall (1990) **12.10 Film:** Species III (2004) **1.10** FYI Daily **1.15 Film:** Species III (2004)

E4

3.00 The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: F Is for Fun with Flags **3.30** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: G Is for Geology **4.00** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: H Is for Hoarding **4.30** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: I Is for Intimacy **5.00** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: J Is for Junior Professor **5.30** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: K Is for Knocking **6.00** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: L Is for Laundry **6.30** The Big Bang Theory: Big Bang A-Z: M Is for Meemaw **7.00 Film:** I, Robot (2004) **9.00 Film:** Red (2010) **11.15** The Inbetweeners **2.40** 8 Out of 10 Cats: More Best Bits **3.20** Hollyoaks

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FILM CHOICES

NEW YEAR'S DAY
Spectre, ITV, 8pm
James Bond goes rogue after receiving a cryptic message that sets him on the trail of a secretive criminal network. While his colleagues face a new threat closer to home, Bond embarks on a globetrotting journey in search of the elusive mastermind behind the syndicate - whom he discovers may have links to his own past. Spy thriller, starring Daniel Craig, Christoph Waltz, Lea Seydoux and Ralph Fiennes. (2015)

TUESDAY
Clueless, ITV, 11.10pm
A rich high-school student uses all her charm and financial clout to boost an awkward new pupil's image, but soon finds she has created a monster - while her own popularity suffers in the process. Comedy inspired by Jane Austen's Emma, starring Alicia Silverstone, Stacey Dash, Brittany Murphy and Paul Rudd. (1995)

Spectre, New Year's Day, ITV, 8pm

WEDNESDAY
Pretty Woman, BBC1, 10.45pm
A ruthless millionaire hires a prostitute while on a business trip. Realising she may be useful in helping him keep up a successful appearance, he pays her to accompany him for a week as he associates with the rich and powerful - but falls in love despite their many differences. Romantic comedy, starring Richard Gere and Julia Roberts. (1990)

THURSDAY
Deadly Stage Fright, Channel 5, 3.20pm
Years after a violent attack sent her into retirement, opera soprano Sarah Conrad agrees to a comeback event, but when she steps back into the limelight, a series of new dangers threaten to keep her from ever singing again. Thriller, starring Jordan Ladd, Brody Hutzler and Alan Pietruszewski. (2017)

FRIDAY
The Bourne Legacy, Channel 4, 11.10pm
A government assassin goes on the run when his employers try to bury their dark secrets by having him killed. Spy thriller sequel, with Jeremy Renner and Rachel Weisz. (2012)

PICK OF THE WEEK

Trying to untie himself from the bonds of organised crime

It may not have the most gripping or serious-sounding drama available this Christmas, but McMafia has its roots in truth and is set to keep us gripped long after the turkey has run out and the tinsel is beginning to droop.

Writers Hossein Amini and James Watkins were inspired by the hard-hitting 2008 non-fiction book McMafia: Seriously Organised Crime by Misha Glenny, which examines various mafia organisations across the globe.

"I am a huge fan of The Godfather, The Sopranos and, more recently, Narcos," claims Glenny. "Hoss and James's brilliant reworking of McMafia takes this tradition onto a global canvas by revealing the immense possibilities open to an ambitious Russian crime family in an interconnected world."

Watkins, who also directs, adds: "The annual turnover of transnational organised crime is estimated at $870 billion. Misha Glenny's brilliant book casts fascinating light on that huge hidden world and shows how terrifyingly close it is to us all.

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to bring that captivating underworld to BBC One."

Heading the cast is James Norton, who seems determined not to trade on his handsome looks by tackling as many varied roles as he possibly can.

For many of us, he first came to prominence as the criminal Tommy Lee Royce in Happy Valley, a chilling character who sent shivers down the spine while terrorising the family of Sarah Lancashire's troubled police sergeant Catherine Cawood.

He couldn't have been more different in Grantchester, the period crime drama based on the books by James Runcie. Norton plays Sidney Chambers, a jazz-loving vicar with a difficult love life who eases his boredom by helping a local police detective solve puzzling crimes. It was the first time he'd been the leading man on TV, and the exposure thrust him into the limelight.

Since then Norton has portrayed tragic hero Prince Andrei in the BBC's lavish but ultimately disappointing adaptation of Tolstoy's War and Peace. He's also maintained a stage career, and is currently appearing in a production of Amy Herzog's acclaimed play Belleville at the Donmar Warehouse.

In the eight-part McMafia he plays Alex Godman, the English-raised son of Russian exiles with a background in organised crime.

Alex has spent his entire life trying to step out from under the shadow of that violent past, forging his own career as a legitimate businessman and setting up home with his girlfriend Rebecca. However, his family's former life is about to raise its ugly ahead once again, forcing him to take drastic measures to protect those he loves.

What starts out as a story of survival and revenge turns into an epic struggle for Alex to escape the shackles of the Godman clan once and for all, denying a long-buried part of himself in the process.

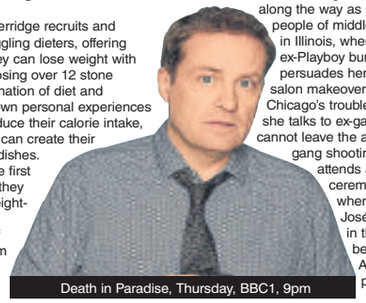
James Norton stars in McMafia, New Year's Day, BBC1, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

NEW YEAR'S DAY
Grandpa's Great Escape
BBC1, 6.55pm
It's now almost traditional for an adaptation of a children's book by David Walliams to pop up over the festive season. The Boy in the Dress, Mr Stink, Billionaire Boy and Gangster Granny have all appeared so far, with Grandpa's Great Escape the latest to make it to the small screen. Tom Courtenay takes the lead role of Grandpa, a Second World War flying ace who must move into old people's home Twilight Towers when his Alzheimer's disease becomes too difficult for his family to cope with full-time. Miss Dandy runs the establishment, but it's clear she isn't exactly a kindly soul, so it's up to Grandpa and his grandson Jack to plot an escape that may also bring the old man face-to-face with his beloved Spitfire. Kit Connor, Jennifer Saunders and Walliams himself are among the supporting cast.

TUESDAY
Celebrity Big Brother: Live Launch
Channel 5, 9pm
And so it begins. The 21st series of Celebrity Big Brother in which another collection of alleged stars co-habit in the Orwellian abode and attempt to get along. Of course many of them won't, and the result should make for interesting TV. Okay, chances are you won't recognise many of the so-called famous faces, but even the recent I'm A Celebrity struggled to land big names for their show, so expect more obscure reality show veterans to grace the pre fab along with the occasional genuine celebrity. Sarah Harding won the last series, but who wins CBB 21? You decide.

WEDNESDAY
Tom Kerridge's Lose Weight For Good
BBC2, 8pm
New series. Chef Tom Kerridge recruits and mentors a group of struggling dieters, offering them advice on ways they can lose weight with long-term results. After losing over 12 stone himself through a combination of diet and exercise, Tom uses his own personal experiences to help the 13 dieters reduce their calorie intake, demonstrating how they can create their own simple, low-calorie dishes. Meeting the group for the first time, Tom lays out what they can expect from their weight-loss journey, and begins with tackling the issue of comfort eating, a problem that many of the group struggle with.


Death in Paradise, Thursday, BBC1, 9pm

Miriam's Big American Adventure
BBC1, 9pm
The irrepressible Miriam Margolyes is no stranger to America, having lived in LA for 16 years. While there, the actress saw the US as a liberal and welcoming country that she came to love. But then 2016 happened, leaving Miriam wondering if she really knew it at all. In this three-part series, Miriam is journeying nearly 1,000 miles from Chicago to New Orleans, immersing herself in communities along the way as she gets to know the people of middle America. She starts in Illinois, where socialite and ex-Playboy bunny Candace Jordan persuades her to undergo a beauty salon makeover. Miriam also visits Chicago's troubled south side where she talks to ex-gang member SP, who cannot leave the area for fear of rival gang shootings. Finally, she attends a citizenship ceremony in Indianapolis where she hears how José, who left his village in the Congo, has become one of America's newest and proudest citizens.

THURSDAY
Death in Paradise
BBC1, 9pm
New series. After being introduced at the end of the last series, Ardal O'Hanlon returns for his first full series as Detective Inspector Jack Mooney, working on the Caribbean island of Saint Marie, where the sun shines all day and it seems half the residents are killers-in-waiting. The DI and his team are tested when a hotel billionaire's fiancée falls from a balcony the day before her lavish wedding. Everything points to suicide - except for the fact that the victim only painted one fingernail. Danny John-Jules and Josephine Jobert co-star, with guest appearances from Denis Lawson, Elizabeth Berrington and Jemima Rooper.

FRIDAY
Will & Grace
Channel 5, 10pm
New series. The US sitcom about a man and woman sharing a flat - and a platonic relationship - returns after an 11-year break. Politics come between Will and Grace when he crushes on a Republican senator and she gets a new interior design contract - for the White House itself. Eric McCormack and Debra Messing star.

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Just blown away by this Windy City

CHICAGO – it's the city of mobsters, skyscrapers, Walt Disney, Michael Jordan and President Obama.

But did you know that it's also the place that brought you Wrigley's chewing gum, invented the chocolate brownie, and gave birth to Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer?

The Windy City is full of surprises. Chicago at Christmas time is a sight to behold. The United States' third biggest city becomes a city of lights – more than four million in fact.

The Lincoln Park Zoo is home to an impressive array of more than two million illuminations. And there are a further million glistening lights along the Magnificent Mile shopping strip. Think Paris – but bigger. Everything is bigger in America.

The big chill – ice skating at the ribbon rink

Jazz hands – Green Mill Cocktail Lounge

SKATING

Meanwhile, you can go ice skating in Millennium Park or the adjacent Maggie Daley Park and feel the chilly winds blow in from Lake Michigan.

For a shopping trip, Chicago is every inch a rival to New York. The city created the concept of the great American department store with names such as Sears, Marshall Field's, Montgomery Ward, and Carson Pirie Scott.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer was actually created for Montgomery Ward in the city by Robert Lewis May in 1939. The store had traditionally been buying and giving away colouring books for Christmas every year and it was decided that creating their own book would save money. It was a hit and a Christmas icon was born.

Today many of the trailblazing names of Chicago's booming department store industry have gone. The impressive Marshall Field's flagship building still exists but is now home to Macy's which controversially bought the firm a decade ago. Interestingly, a former stock boy at Marshall Field's by the name of Harry Selfridge started out in the Chicago store before moving to London and founding Selfridges.

Also at Christmas is the city's famous Christkindlmarket where Daley Plaza becomes an old German village filled with quaint shops and holiday treats. You can also embark on a trolley tour of the 'holiday lights' with the Chicago Trolley & Double Decker Company from outside the John Hancock Center. The tour lasts two-and-half hours and let's you explore the magic of Chicago's lights and sights.

But one of the best ways to get a feel for the city is by taking a holiday hike walking and food tour with Bobby's Bike Hike. The tour takes you to all the main sights in the city. It includes sampling local craft beer, a chocolate brownie at the Palmer House Hotel (where the brownie was invented), the Chicago-style hot dog, and deep dish pizza; sampling all four is an absolute must.

You could easily spend a day at the Museum of Science and Industry – the largest of its type in the Western Hemisphere – which is housed in the only remaining building from the 1893 World's Fair.

One of the best things to do is to take a boat ride through the city on an architecture cruise. But if you want to view the city from above, head to the Willis Tower, formerly known as the Sears Tower. At 110-storeys, 1,450ft (442.1m), it is America's second tallest building. You won't regret a night at The Second City comedy club. And no visit would be complete without going to the legendary Green Mill jazz club.

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Commercial features

Motorland has been serving the local community in Walsall and Brownhills by providing quality used cars for many years. From the very start they have prided themselves on providing excellent customer service, helping customers make the right choice in selecting a suitable car for their needs and now with the opening of their new Cannock site look to continue that same level of service

"Over 75 per cent of our business is either from returning customers, or from customers that have been recommended to us. We understand that the best form of advertising is 'word of mouth' and that is why we want all of our customers to be extremely pleased with their purchase."

Following the success of their first showroom in Bloxwich they have since custom built a second showroom in Brownhills and doubled the quantity of stock to help fulfil local demand. The new site in Cannock will stock 60 cars, totalling over 200 cars in group stock, the opportunity arose for Motorland to move into Cannock with the team seeing it as an ideal addition to their group.

Andy Matthews

Richard Peace has joined Motorland to manage the Cannock site, he has worked successfully throughout Staffordshire in the Motor Trade for over 30 years.

He said: "This is a great opportunity to join a successful growing business and continue to serve the customers I have dealt with for many years."

Andy Matthews and Indy Pal have between them over 60 years experience in the car trade and during that time they have sold thousands of cars to local people in Walsall, Willenhall, Lichfield and the surrounding towns and are actively looking to open new sites to expand the business.

Over the years they have sold cars to generations of the same family. Existing customers have recommended them to supply their mother, daughter, son, sister, brother etc. with a reliable, quality car. They aim to create a relaxed professional atmosphere, ensuring that they offer the right vehicles at the right price every time.

"We personally hand pick all of our cars from quality sources and each car is history checked to ensure that there is no outstanding finance, the car has not been reported stolen and has not been written off by an insurance company."

All of our cars are inspected by trained technicians and prepared to the highest standard. In addition to the sales centres, there is also a Servicing and MOT centre in Walsall.

They offer competitive part exchange allowances, a no pressure environment and arrange a low rate finance package with PCP deals also available to help you purchase your next car.

When it comes to choosing your car Motorland offers a choice of 27 funders, with 50 tiers of acceptance, based on your circumstances, to ensure they obtain the best finance acceptance based on your individual circumstances,

"We pride ourselves on the price you see being the price you pay, no hidden admin fees and every car comes with a sixth months warranty, we are a Google 5 Star rated dealer and you can read our reviews online

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Saturday 30 Dec	2017	10.00 - 16.00	CLOSED
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Five-star NCAP safety for new Kia Stinger and Stonic

The new Kia Stinger gran turismo and Kia Stonic compact crossover have been awarded the highest-possible collision safety ratings by Euro NCAP. Both vehicles achieved the full five-star rating from Euro NCAP, with every Stinger model qualifying for the rating, and all Stonic models fitted with Kia's Advanced Driver Assistance Pack.

The independent safety testing organisation awarded the Stinger 93 per cent for adult occupant protection, 81 per cent for child occupant protection, 78 per cent for pedestrian protection, and 82 per cent in the 'Safety Assist' category.The Stonic was awarded 93 per cent for adult protection, 84 per cent for child occupant protection, 71 per cent for pedestrian protection, and 59 per cent in the 'Safety Assist' category.

The scores are underpinned by the vehicles' Advanced High Strength Steel bodyshells, paired with standard-fit airbags (six in the Stonic and seven in the Stinger) and a wide array of passive and high-tech active safety features.

Euro NCAP praised both cars for their passenger compartments remaining stable in a collision, with high levels of protection for passengers in every seat. For the Stinger in particular, passengers were well protected from whiplash, while the effects of pedestrian impact were reduced by an active deployable bonnet. Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB) helped both the Stinger and Stonic to avoid all impacts during testing for the 'Safety Assist' category.

Kia's Stinger has the marque's latest advanced driver assistance systems

The Stinger is available with Kia's latest advanced driver assistance systems, while every car is equipped as standard with Vehicle Stability Management (VSM) and Electronic Stability Control (ESC). Other standard safety features available include: Autonomous Emergency Braking; Lane Keep Assist System; Speed Limit Information Function; Hill-start Assist Control; Active Bonnet System; Emergency Stop Signalling and High Beam Assist. The 'GT-Line S' and 'GT S' variants are additionally equipped with Blind Spot Detection with Rear Cross Traffic Alert. The Stinger is also fitted as standard with an innovative Driver Attention Warning (DAW) system to combat distracted or drowsy driving. The system monitors several inputs from the vehicle and the driver, and sounds a warning chime and displays a graphic in the instrument binnacle if it senses a lapse in concentration from the driver.

Advanced Driver Assistance technologies available in the Stonic include: Autonomous Emergency Braking with pedestrian recognition; Lane Departure Warning System with Driver Attention Warning & High Beam Assist. Lane Keeping Assist System will also be available to Stonic buyers from the middle of 2018. The Stonic is equipped as standard with Vehicle Stability Management (VSM) and Electronic Stability Control (ESC).

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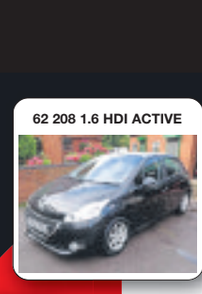

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Ford scrappage extended and Fiesta leads market

UK market leader Ford announces the extension of its successful scrappage scheme as Ford CV sales and share increase in November's CV market and sales of the all-new Fiesta reinforce its leadership of the market.

According to the official November sales figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT):

- Ford is the UK market leader in total vehicle, car and CV sales
- Fiesta is UK best-seller; Transit Custom first in CV and sixth in total vehicle charts
- Transit range is second in UK total vehicle sales
- Ford has five models in the UK Top 20 – Fiesta (1st), Focus (4th), Transit Custom (6th), Kuga (12th) and Transit (20th)

The Ford scrappage scheme, which includes cars and CVs, is to be extended into the first quarter of 2018. The success of the scheme, which has seen over 10,500 vehicles scrapped and replaced with cleaner, more fuel efficient vehicles, is expanded to include the Ford Ranger as well as the most popular all-new Fiesta, Focus and Transit CV models.

Andy Barratt, Ford of Britain chairman and managing director, said: "The Ford scrappage scheme has been so well received by our customers and I'm pleased to announce its extension in to next year. We have an excellent product line-up and our scheme is applicable to one of the broadest ranges of vehicles, including the segment leading Ford Ranger.

Ford's scrappage scheme now extends to the Ford Ranger

"We continue to carry strong sales momentum as we more towards the end of the year. Our CV sales growth was particularly positive in an increasingly challenging market. It's also rewarding to see the all-new Fiesta strengthening its leadership position as we continue the launch of the full model range, with Fiesta Active and ST still to come to complete the line-up of our most technologically advanced Fiesta ever."

The official figures released by the SMMT show that total car sales in November were down 11.2 per cent to 163,541 units, compared with November 2016. For the year to date (end November) UK car sales were 2,338,144, down five per cent compared with the same period in 2016. Ford car sales for this period were 271,855 some 78,738 registrations ahead of its nearest rival.

Ford is the clear leader in retail car sales, which most accurately reflect the preferences of private buyers. At 11.7 per cent, Ford's November retail car sales share was 3.9 percentage points ahead of its nearest rival, and for the year to date, Ford's retail car sales share was 11.7 per cent.

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Sunday 31 Dec	2017	CLOSED	CLOSED
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Thanks to Mavis' Friends donations will be made to Dementia Uk.

Thanks to Family for flowers, support and kind messages. Thanks to Carers at Alma Court Home, and to Sellmans for making the Funeral Service more bearable at this difficult time.

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WILLIS

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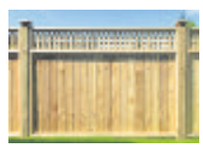

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4 Pets & Animals

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3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree.

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5 Business & Farming

Business Opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering into any obligations.

6 Property

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NOTICE TO READERS
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10 Personals

Personal

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Public Notices

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 (AS AMENDED)
ROAD TRAFFIC (TEMPORARY RESTRICTIONS) ACT 1991
VARIOUS ROADS IN THE DISTRICT OF CANNOCK CHASE
(SURFACE DRESSING 2018)
DIVERSION OF VEHICULAR TRAFFIC

NOTICE is hereby given that the Staffordshire County Council intend, not less than seven days from the date of this Notice, to make an Order the effect of which will be to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding in those lengths of various roads as given in Schedule A/W2 below unless the vehicle is being used in connection with the works; or unless the vehicle requires access to premises on the length of road or is being used for police, fire brigade or ambulance purposes. Pedestrian access will be maintained.

SCHEDULE A/W2
A34 Ringway, A4601 Church Street, Rumer Hill Road, Devon Road, York Road, Oxford Road, Salop Drive, Lincoln Drive, Devon Green, Warwick Close, Surrey Close, High Green, Wolverhampton Road, Stafford Road, The Green, Church Street, **Cannock;** Sycamore Hill, Chestall Road, Holly Hill Road, Cumberledge Hill, New Hayes Road, Park Gate Road, Baden Powell Close, Gillwell Road, Bradwell Lane, Uplands Close, High Meadow, Chapel Lane, Slang Lane, Ivy Lane, **Cannock Wood;** Buds Road, **Gentleshaw;** B4154 Market Street, Cannock Road, Tudor Road, Fisher Street, Cowley Green, Peel Drive, Broadhurst Green Service Road, Greenwood Park, Rowley Close, Evergreen Heights, Croft Avenue, Clarkes Avenue, Cotton Grove, Spruce Road, Tower Road, Pine Tree Close, Plantation Road, Mendip Road, Cotswold Road, Cedar Close, Heather Road, Briar Close, Heather Road, Heather Mews, **Hednesford;** Hill Top, Newman Grove, Ravenhill Terrace, Springhill Terrace Road, Kelly Avenue, Coulthwaite Way, Ravenhill Close, Eremon Close, Mckie Way, Gorse Road, The Rise, Yew Tree Road, Cowlishaw Way, Oak Tree Road, Myatt Way, Heath Road, Larch Road, The Green, Beeches Road, The Green, Waterside, Ravens Lea Road, Wood View, Talbot Road, Cherry Tree Road, Setterfield Way, Sutton Close, Madden Close, Harley Close, Stile Close, Gorse Lane, **Rugeley.**

Diversion routes will be signed on site where required. For more information please visit www.roadworks.org or contact us on 0300 111 8000. The Order will come into operation on 22 January 2018, and the said works will commence on or as near as practicable to that date. It is anticipated that the works will be completed by 28 September 2018.

The Order will remain in force for a period of 18 months or until the surface dressing works, which it is proposed to carry out on or near the road, have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

John Tradewell, Director for Strategy, Governance and Change, 2 Staffordshire Place, Tipping Street, Stafford. ST16 2DH

Ref: 4096337; Enquiries: Customer Contact Centre; Tel: 0300 111 8000 http://roadworks.org

Date: 28 December 2017

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 (AS AMENDED)
ROAD TRAFFIC (TEMPORARY RESTRICTIONS) ACT 1991
VARIOUS ROADS IN THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE
(SURFACE DRESSING 2018)
DIVERSION OF VEHICULAR TRAFFIC

NOTICE is hereby given that the Staffordshire County Council intend, not less than seven days from the date of this Notice, to make an Order the effect of which will be to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding in those lengths of various roads as given in Schedule A/W3 below unless the vehicle is being used in connection with the works; or unless the vehicle requires access to premises on the length of road or is being used for police, fire brigade or ambulance purposes. Pedestrian access will be maintained.

SCHEDULE A/W3
Four Ashes Road, Crateford Lane, **Brewood;** A460 Wolverhampton Road, **Cannock;** B4156 Wolverhampton Road, B4156 High Street, B4156 Low Street, B4156 Station Street, Saredon Road, Queen Street, Cross Street, Wesley Avenue, Zion Close, **Cheslyn Hay;** A458 Bridgnorth Road/Cote Lane, **Enville;** Catsbridge Lane, **Four Crosses;** A5 Watling Street, **Gailey to Weston under Lizard;** Saredon Lane, Great Saredon Road, Wood Lane, Windy Arbour Lane, Saredon Hall Road, **Great Saredon;** A34 Walsall Road, B4156 Station Road, Hilton Lane, Gorsey Lane, Darges Lane, Olde Hall Lane/Quinton Avenue, Sunset Close, Sunbeam Drive, Chestnut Drive, Hall Lane, Shanklin Close, Alwyn Close, Foxland Avenue, Park Lane, Paddock Lane, Brook Lane, Barn Croft, Ash Lane, Telford Avenue, Oxford Close, Cotswold Avenue, Johns Lane, Lea Lane, Wardles Lane, Field Lane, Lambourne Close, Kempton Drive, Newbury Close, Beaumont Close, Beaumont Road, Lingfield Drive, Lingfield Close, **Great Wyrley;** Church Lane, **Hatherton;** A41 Holyhead Road, A41 Newport Road, **Oaken;** Saredon Road, School Lane, Church Road, Old Cannock Road, Church Road, St Marys Close, **Shareshill;** A4601 Wolverhampton Road, Wood Lane, **Wedges Mills.**

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HOW MUCH DO YOU REMEMBER? 60 TO TACKLE IN END OF YEAR QUIZ

Test your 2017 sporting knowledge

Who beat Andy Murray in the Australian Open?

Name this Sutton goalkeeper involved in 'Piegate'

Britain's Andrew Pozzi struck gold. At which event?

Which golfer beat Justin Rose to the Masters?

Who beat John Higgins for world glory?

Name this surprise French Open winner

JANUARY

1) World number one Andy Murray suffered a surprise defeat against which player in the fourth round of the Australian Open?

2) Whom did Dutchman Michael van Gerwen beat in the final of the William Hill PDC World Darts Championship at Alexandra Palace?

3) Serena Williams won the Australian Open women's title for her 23rd grand slam singles title, an open era record, but which player did she face in the final?

4) Which Real Madrid superstar was named best men's player at the inaugural Best FIFA Football Awards?

5) Against which Premier League side did Wayne Rooney score his 250th goal for Manchester United to beat Sir Bobby Charlton's club record?

FEBRUARY

6) England registered a 15th successive rugby union Test victory to set a new national record, with a 19-16 triumph over which Six Nations rivals at Twickenham?

7) Which team overcame a 25-point deficit to beat the Atlanta Falcons 34-28 after overtime at Super Bowl LI?

8) Name the Canada tennis player who was defaulted for striking a ball in anger that hit umpire Arnaud Gabas during the deciding rubber of the Davis Cup tie against Great Britain.

9) Name Sutton's 'roly-poly goalie' who resigned after eating a pie in the dugout during the televised FA Cup defeat to Arsenal, on which a bookmaker had offered odds for him to do so.

10) Who stepped down as England cricket captain after 59 Tests in charge? And who replaced him?

MARCH

11) Who replaced Ian Drake as the new chief executive of British Cycling?

12) Which member of Celtic's 1967 European Cup winning Lisbon Lions squad died in March at the age of 73?

13) British athlete Andrew Pozzi won gold in which event on the opening day of the European Indoor Championships in Belgrade?

14) Barcelona overturned a first-leg 4-0 deficit to beat which team 6-1 at the Nou Camp and so secure a place in the quarter-finals of the Champions League?

15) Who won the Cheltenham Gold Cup?

APRIL

16) Who was appointed captain for the British and Irish Lions' summer tour of New Zealand?

17) Who was thrown out of a Fed Cup tie in Constanta, Romania after hurling foul-mouthed abuse at the Great Britain team and journalists?

18) Which horse won the Grand National?

19) Which British boxer beat Wladimir Klitschko in 11 punishing rounds at Wembley to add the WBA and IBO heavyweight titles to his IBF belt?

20) Who beat England's Justin Rose in a play-off to win the Masters?

MAY

21) Name the winners of the 2016/2017 Sky Bet Championship title.

22) Saracens beat which French club to win the European Champions Cup final at Murrayfield?

23) Who defeated John Higgins 18-15 to win the Betfred World Snooker Championship for a third time?

24) Manchester United defeated which Dutch club to win the Europa League final in Stockholm?

25) Which team beat Wasps 23-20 after extra time in the Aviva Premiership final at Twickenham?

JUNE

26) Name the 40-1 outsider who won the Investec Derby at Epsom.

27) Which Latvian tennis player recorded a shock victory over title favourite Simona Halep to win the women's title at the French Open?

28) Which golfer won the US Open at Erin Hills.

29) Name the winners of the America's Cup in Bermuda.

30) Who beat Stan Wawrinka to win a 10th French Open tennis title success?

JULY

31) Which team beat Surrey by four wickets to win the Royal London One-Day Cup at Lord's?

32) Which golfer secured victory in the Open Championship at Royal Birkdale?

33) Who did British number one Johanna Konta lose against in the semi-finals at Wimbledon?

34) Name the Great Britain swimmer who won gold in the 100m breaststroke at the World Championships in Budapest.

35) Who defeated Marin Cilic in the final to claim a record eighth men's singles title at Wimbledon?

AUGUST

36) Hull beat which team to retain rugby league's Challenge Cup with a 18-14 win at Wembley?

37) Name the British quartet who won the men's 4x100 metres relay at the World Championships in London, where Usain Bolt pulled up injured on the anchor leg for Jamaica.

38) Which golfer won the US PGA Championship at Quail Hollow?

39) In which round did boxer Floyd Mayweather beat Mixed Martial Arts superstar Conor McGregor in their controversial bout in Las Vegas ?

40) Who defeated England to win the Women's Rugby World Cup final in Belfast?

SEPTEMBER

41) Name the cities announced as hosts of the Olympic Games in 2024 and 2028 respectively.

42) Tour de France winner Chris Froome claimed victory in which prestigious cycle race to complete a rare double?

43) Which cricket team secured a first County Championship title win since 1992?

44) Who secured her first tennis grand slam title with a 6-3 6-0 over fellow American Madison Keys at the US Open?

45) Which English bowler took his Test wicket tally to 500 against West Indies at Lord's?

OCTOBER

46) Which striker was the first player in English football to be retrospectively banned for diving.

47) Victory at the Mexican Grand Prix saw Lewis Hamilton clinch the Formula One drivers' championship. How many times has he now been world champion - three, four or five?

48) Which team did England beat 5-2 to win football's Under-17 World Cup final?

49) Who won gold for Britain in the men's pommel horse at the World Gymnastics Championships in Montreal?

50) Who beat Castleford 24-6 in the Betfred Super League Grand Final at Old Trafford?

NOVEMBER

51) Which baseball team claimed the World Series for the first time after beating the Los Angeles Dodgers in a winner-takes-all game seven?

52) Name the English golfer who won the European Tour's Race to Dubai.

53) Why was boxer David Haye forced to postpone his rematch with Tony Bellew?

54) Which team did England beat to reach the Rugby League World Cup final?

55) Name the England cricketer who was handed his Ashes debut in the first Test at the Gabba.

DECEMBER

56) Name the countries England will face in Group G at the 2018 World Cup following December's draw in Moscow.

57) Which player equalled Steve Davis' record of six UK Championship snooker titles with victory over Shaun Murphy in York?

58) Cyclist Sir Bradley Wiggins made a return to competitive action at which event during December?

59) Name the team who defeated Seattle Sounders to win the MLS Cup.

60) What was reported to have been thrown towards Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho following the derby defeat to Premier League rivals Manchester City?

Lewis Hamilton. How many titles?

Why did David Haye pull out of a fight?

The winner of the Open at Royal Birkdale. But who?

Mayweather v McGregor. Which round was it stopped?

Chris Froome celebrated a double in which race?

Shaun Murphy. UK Championship runner-up. To whom?

Answers

JANUARY
1) Mischa Zverev; 2) Gary Anderson; 3) Venus Williams, her sister; 4) Cristiano Ronaldo; 5) Stoke

FEBRUARY
6) France; 7) New England Patriots; 8) Denis Shapovalov; 9) Wayne Shaw; 10) Alastair Cook stepped down, succeeded by Joe Root

MARCH
11) Julie Harrington; 12) Tommy Gemmell; 13) 60 metres hurdles; 14) Paris St Germain; 15) Sizing John

APRIL
16) Wales trainer Sam Warburton; 17) Romania Fed Cup team captain Ilie Nastase; 18) One For Arthur; 19) Anthony Joshua

20) Sergio Garcia

MAY
21) Newcastle; 22) Clermont Auvergne; 23) Mark Selby; 24) Ajax; 25) Exeter Chiefs

JUNE
26) Wings Of Eagles; 27) Jelena Ostapenko; 28) Brooks Koepka; 29) Emirates Team New Zealand; 0) Rafael Nadal

JULY
31) Nottinghamshire; 32) Jordan Spieth; 33) Venus Williams; 34) Adam Peaty; 35) Roger Federer

AUGUST
36) Wigan; 37) Chijindu Ujah, Adam Gemili, Danny Talbot, Nethaneel Mitchell-Blake; 38) Justin Thomas; 39) 10th round; 40) New Zealand

SEPTEMBER
41) Paris (2024) and Los Angeles (2028); 42) La Vuelta; 43) Essex; 44) Sloane Stephens; 45) James Anderson

OCTOBER
46) Shaun Miller (Carlisle); 47) Four; 48) Spain; 49) Max Whitlock; 50) Leeds

NOVEMBER
51) The Houston Astros; 52) Tommy Fleetwood; 53) Have suffered a biceps tear while on stairs

DECEMBER
56) Belgium, Tunisia and Panama; 57) Ronnie O'Sullivan; 58) British Rowing Indoor Champion-ships; 59) Toronto FC; 60) Milk and water

Sport

Well, what do you know? Try our 2017 sports quiz

Page 43

Hayes try in vain to stop slump

Warwick 3 Heath Hayes 1

HAYES could not shake off their continuing spell of poor results, as they faced Racing Club Warwick who were riding high on the back of a rich vein of form recently.

The conditions certainly did not provide Hayes any favours, with a heavy pitch which saw Racing take an early lead through Luke Cole after just 10 minutes.

And it wasn't long before Cole's second, his shot crossing the goal line on 28 minutes.

There was still some hope for the visitors however, when Brad Rolstan pulled a goal back for Hayes just before the half-time break on 40 minutes, after he took advantage of a mistake from Racing's keeper, Tom Cross, to roll the ball into the empty net.

In the second half, an early chance to equalise was squandered when Rolstan's free kick cannoned off the defensive wall and Andrew Davis missed the follow-up.

But Hayes weren't giving up, and next it was James McCready's turn to try a shot, again, bringing a great save out of Cross.

They kept coming as both Ben Derbyshire and Rolstan were further denied by the shot-stopper who, unfortunately for Hayes, was having a great day between the sticks.

The result was eventually sealed for Racing when Carter fired home from close range to bring the score, and the result to 3-1.

Scholars get top marks to hit four in emphatic win

Chasetown 4 Kidsgrove 0

CHASETOWN returned to winning ways with an emphatic victory over their Staffordshire rivals in Evo-Stik League Division One South.

The hosts started brightly and Jack Langston was inches wide with a free-kick after leading scorer Muzzy Nduna had been fouled on the edge of the box.

The Scholars struck on 28 minutes when a Chris Baker throw-in slipped out of his hands but Will Whieldon reacted quickly and hooked over a cross which Langston dived in to head home.

Grove were reduced to 10 men when skipper Ross Davidson received a straight red card for tugging down George Cater who was clean through on goal.

Whieldon's free-kick beat Dave Parton and struck the inside of the post with Oli Hayward quickest to tap home into an empty net.

Chasetown started the second half on the front foot and Langston made it 3-0 almost immediately after the restart.

Cater forced a stunning save from Parton but then made it four when he slid in to turn home a Nduna cross.

Bailey targets Pitmen play-off place

DEFENDER Ben Bailey feels Hednesford Town have all the right ingredients to push for promotion from the Evo-Stik Premier.

The Keys Park outfit appear to be back on track following a poor couple of years.

They went through several bosses as they were relegated from National League North and then stuttered to a bottom-half finish last season.

With the return of Rob Smith as manager and Bailey back on the playing staff from AFC Telford United things have improved.

Before the festive fixtures, Hednesford had won their last four games in all competitions and were lying 10th – seven points off the play-offs. Said Bailey, who played 335 times during his first spell at Keys Park: "It has taken a bit of time for the manager to get what he wants. He's brought in the right players now though and we have started to turn things around.

"The past couple of years have been frustrating for the club – and for me personally, getting relegated with Hednesford and then fighting against the drop with Telford – but I think it is different now. I think we can push on during the second half of the season and look at those play-offs."

Bailey, under Smith, managed to get promoted to National League North with the Pitmen in 2012/13, winning 2-1 against FC United of Manchester in the play-off final. The following campaign, Bailey and his team-mates reached the National North play-offs. Darren Campion was also part of those squads and recently returned to the club from Walsall Wood.

Having been there and done it, 26-year-old Bailey sees no reason – with the help of an array of talented youngsters, such as Joe Fitzpatrick – why the Pitmen cannot do it again.

"We can definitely push for those play-off positions," he said. "I think we can really kick on during the second half of the season. We'll just have to see what happens in the new year."

SHAW WINNERS PAINT TOWN RED

Pitmen 1 Shaw Lane 3

HEDNESFORD Town fell to defeat against Evo-Stik Premier promotion-chasers Shaw Lane in controversial circumstances – after seeing a man dismissed in each half.

The home side made the perfect start when defender Charlie Gatter swept the ball home after a corner hadn't been cleared.

By Simon Stone

Although Shaw Lane showed plenty of attacking intent the Pitmen still continued to press forward with James Fitzgibbon seeing a shot deflect into the side netting.

Gatter almost lobbed his own goalkeeper in the 26th minute - but the ball bounced into the side netting with Spencer Harris heading the resulting corner wide.

Action

Hednesford keeper James Wren made a smart double stop on the half hour mark as he first scampered back to clear off the line before blocking an effort from Alex Byrne.

The Shaw Lane midfielder was in the thick of the action again in the 41st minute as he drove forward before firing his effort over the bar.

Hednesford's Danny Glover fired narrowly wide in the 45th minute and then saw red after picking up asecond yellow card.

The 10 men of Hednesford battled hard at the start of the second half and they didn't look as they had a man disadvantage with Fitzgibbon again going close.

But the Pitmen came unstuck in the 70th minute when a corner was only half cleared and Nicky Walker fired home a lovely effort into the bottom corner.

The hosts were reduced to nine men after Louis Harris was shown a straight red card for a dangerous tackle only seconds after coming on after a sliding tackle was deemed dangerous.

Shaw Lane now sensed victory and went ahead in the 80th minute when Damien Reeves fired home from 12 yards.

The visitors added a third late on when a ball over the top was taken down by Walker, who rounded Wren and fired into an empty net.

Coady not thinking of record

Wolves players including skipper Conor Coady celebrate

WOLVES captain Conor Coady claims the Championship leaders are not thinking about the possibility of becoming record breakers as they continue to set a ferocious pace at the top.

Saturday's 1-0 win over Ipswich Town saw the Molineux men stretch their advantage over second-placed Cardiff to seven points.

A haul of 54 points at the midway mark of the campaign means Nuno Espirito Santo's men are on course to break Reading's record second tier points haul of 106, set during the 2005/06 season.

But speaking ahead of Boxing Day's trip to Millwall, Coady insisted the focus at Molineux remains very much on the short-term.

"The points record is a massive one and no-one at the club is thinking about that at the minute," he said. "We had a conversation with the manager in the week and he said it's not about points, it's not about thinking where we can get to, it's about winning football matches."

Jones aims to be the last man standing

CHASETOWN'S Luke Jones is among eight boxers competing for BCB's Midlands Boxing Super Series: The Super Featherweights in the new year.

Fights will take place over three nights, but there can be only one winner, who will be crowned the Midlands Area Super Featherweight champion.

Alongside Jones, Old Hill's Manny Zaber, Paul Holt and Kane Baker, both of Birmingham, Tamworth duo Louis Fielding and Josh Bailie, West Bromwich's Jack Summers and Derby's Indi Sangha will all compete to be become the last man standing.

The quarter finals will take place at Walsall FC on February 10, with four fights of six three-minute rounds.

The semi-finals and final will take place later in 2018 by the time current champion, Leon Woodstock, will have vacated his crown.

"We're really looking forward to what we hope will be the first of a series of competitions that will see local fighters compete for not only local bragging rights but also a Midlands Title," said Head of Boxing at BCB, Errol Johnson. "We are grateful to the British Boxing Board of Control and Martin Florey, Richard Vaughan and Rob Smith in particular for their support.

"We had to postpone the Series but are delighted to get it back on track."

Tickets are £35 general admission, £40 on the door, and £60 VIP ringside to include buffet and waitress service. Call 01922 651414.

Games bike racing could be on Chase

CANNOCK Chase is on track to host Commonwealth Games racing after Birmingham was named as the 2022 host city.

The Second City was confirmed as the hosts last week – and the Chase is expected to be named as the venue for the mountain biking event.

Cannock Chase Council leader George Adamson said: "Cannock Chase District Council has been a strong supporter of the Commonwealth Games 2022 bid and we are really pleased the Games are coming to the West Midlands. In particular, it is likely that the mountain bike events will be held on Cannock Chase."

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